POHEK

BOSTON UNIVERSITY
LIBRARIES

Mugar Memorial Library

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2013

http://archive.org/details/thetheoryoffinit00pohe

BOSTON UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL

Thesis

THE THEORY OF A FINITE GOD IN PHILOSOPHY

FROM HUME TO THE PRESENT

Submitted by

Marguerite Virginia Pohek

(A.B., Boston University, 1924)

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for

the degree of Master of Arts

1925

BOSTON UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS
LIBRARY

A.M. 1925
po

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

Archer, Wm., God and Mr. Wells: A Critical Examination of "God the Invisible King".* N.Y.: Alfred Knopf, 1917. Pp. 136.

Beckwith, C.A., The Idea of God. N.Y.: Macmillan, 1924. Pp. 216, 218-19.

Binns, L.E., Mr. Wells' Invisible King: A Criticism.* London ; The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. N.Y. : Macmillan, 1919. Pp. 111, Preface x.

Bowne, B.P., Metaphysics. rev. ed. Boston ; Houghton Mifflin, 1910. Pp. 94 - 120.

Bowne, B.P., Personalism. Boston : Houghton Mifflin, 1908. Pp. 286 - 302.

Brightman, E.S., Introduction to Philosophy. N.Y. ; Holt, 1925. P. 334f.

Brightman, E.S., "The Meaning of Obligation". The Rochester Theological Seminary Bulletin, November, 1924. Pp. 69 - 70.

Foster, F.H., "Some Theistic Implications of Bergson's Philosophy". Am. Jour. Theol., XXII (1918), 274-299.

Foster, G.B., The Function of Religion in Man's Struggle for Existence. Chicago : The University of Chicago Press, 1909. Pp. 173 - 183.

Hendel, C.W., Studies in the Philosophy of David Hume. Princeton : The Princeton University Press, 1925. Pp. 365 - 382.

Hobhouse, L.T., Development and Purpose. London : Macmillan, 1913. Pp. 361 - 372.

Höffding, H., A History of Modern Philosophy. Tr. from the German rd ed. by B.E. Meyer. London : Macmillan, 1920. I, 460 -463; 492 - 496. II. 427 - 433.

Holland, G.S., Creeds and Critics. London : A.R. Mowbray, 1918. Pp. 204 - 225.

Howison, G.H., The Limits of Evolution and Other Essays. 2nd ed. N.Y. : Macmillan, 1904. Pp. 314; 317; 325-6; 351-56; 387; 392; 403; 420-26.

Hume, D., Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion.* London, 1779. Stereotype edition. Boston : J.P. Mendum, 1849. Pp. 230 - 282.

Hume, D., The Natural History of Religion, London, 1755. Stereotype edition, Boston : J.P. Mendum, 1849. Pp. 188 - 206.

James, Wm., A Pluralistic Universe. N.Y. : Longmans Green, 1909. Pp. 44; 311; 318 - 320; 229ff.

James, Wm., Pragmatism. N.Y.; Longmans Green, 1907. Pp. 273 - 301.

James, Wm., The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy. N.Y. : Longmans Green, 1897. Pp. 181 - 2.

Leighton, J.A., The Field of Philosophy. 2nd ed. Columbus : R.G. Adams, 1919. Pp. 264 268; 463 - 473.

Leighton, J.A., Man and the Cosmos. N.Y. : Appleton, 1922. Pp. 527 - 535.

Lodge, Sir Oliver, "The Christian Idea of God." Hibbert Journal, IX (1911), 697 - 716.

Macintosh, D.C., Theology as an Empirical Science. N.Y. : Macmillan, 1919. Pp. 159 - 176; 181 - 186; 195 - 205; 217 - 227.

McConnell, F.J., Is God Limited?* N.Y. : Abingdon Press, 1924. Pp. 297.

McGiffert, A.C., The Rise of Modern Religious Ideas. N.Y. : Macmillan, 1915. Pp. 148 - 149; 229 - 233.

McTaggart, J.M.E., Some Dogmas of Religion. London : Edward Arnold, 1906. Pp. 164 - 169; 186; 192 - 196; 221 - 260; 294 ff.

Mill, J.S., Autobiography. London : Longmans, 1873. Pp. 1 - 61.

Mill, J.S., Three Essays on Religion.* N.Y. : Holt, 1874. Esp. pp. 1 - 65; 130 - 141; 76- 95; 242 - 257.

Overstreet, H.A., "The Democratic Conception of God". Hibbert Journal, XI (1913), 394 - 411.

Perry, R.B., The Present Conflict of Ideals. N.Y. : Longmans, Green, 1918. Pp. 316 - 330.

Pringle-Pattison, A. Seth, The Idea of God in the Light of Recent Philosophy. 2nd ed. N.Y. : Oxford University Press, 1920. Pp. 19 - 22; 324 - 325; 327; 382 - 408.

Rashdall, H., "Personality, Human and Divine". Pp. 369 - 393 in Personal Idealism, edited by H. Sturt. London : Macmillan, 1902.

Rashdall, H., Philosophy and Religion, 1st ed., 1909. 3rd impression. London : Duckworth and Co., 1924. Pp. 79 - 86.

Rashdall, H., The Theory of Good and Evil. Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1907. Bk. III, esp. pp. 211 - 246; 286 - 294; 335 - 356.

Rashdall, H., "The Ultimate Basis of Theism". Contentio Veritatis, pp. 1 - 58. London : Murray, 1902.

Reeman, E.H., Do We Need a New Idea of God?* Philadelphia : Jacobs, 1917. Pp. 214.

Rousseau, J.J., Ouvres, avec des notes historiques. Tome X, pp. 3 - 135. Rousseau a Christophe de Beaumont, November 18, 1762. Appended after the letter (pp. 136 - 158) is the Mandement de Monseigneur L'Archeveque de Paris which called forth Rousseau's response in the letter. Paris : Ches Lefevre, Libraire, 1820.

Schiller, F.C.S., Riddles of the Sphinx. London : Swan Sonnenschein, 1891. Pp. 302 - 362.

Schiller, F.C.S., Studies in Humanism. London : Macmillan, 1907. Pp. 137 - 8; 287 - 8; 328 - 9; 418; 435 - 6.

Sorley, W.R., Moral Values and the Idea of God. 2nd ed. Cambridge : University Press, 1921. Pp. 327; 332ff; 337 - 8; 341; 483 - 485.

Ukichi, Kawaguchi, "The Doctrine of Evolution and the Conception of God" Am. Jour. Theol., XIX (1915), 550 - 576.

Webb, C.C.J., God and Personality. London : Geo. Allen and Unwin, 1918. Pp. 134 - 155.

Weber, A., History of Philosophy. Tr. by F. Thilly from the 6th French ed. N.Y. : Scribner's, 1896. Pp. 134 - 139.

Wells, H.G., First and Last Things. London : Constable, 1908. Pp. 188.

Wells, H.G., God the Invisible King.* N.Y. : Macmillan, 1917. Pp. 174.

Wells, H.G., Mr. Britling Sees It Through. N.Y. : Macmillan, 1916. Pp. 406 ff.

Wright, H.W., "An Immutable Absolute or a God Who Strives?" Am. Jour. Theol., XI (1907), 128 - 130.

Wright, W.K., A Student's Philosophy of Religion. N.Y. : Macmillan, 1922. Pp. 376 - 381; 388 - 390.

* These books bear entirely upon the problem here discussed.

THE THEORY OF A FINITE GOD IN PHILOSOPHY FROM HUME TO THE PRESENT

I. SKETCH OF THE HISTORY OF THE EARLIER BELIEF IN A FINITE GOD AS SEEN IN FOUR REPRESENTATIVE VIEWS:

A. The beginnings of religious thought.

1. Genesis of all monotheistic beliefs in polytheism.(2)

2. Each god of polytheism only a *primus inter pares*; therefore finite.(2)

B. With the gradual evolution of thought a more clearly defined conception of Deity.(2)

1. Growing emphasis on problem of theodicy in religious thinking, leading to(2)

2. Epicurus's (ca. 342 - 270 B.C.) classic resolution of the difficulty : "Is God willing to prevent evil but not able? then is he impotent. Is he able but not willing? then is he malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Whence then is evil?" (2-3)

a. In reply to which he arrives, in his thinking, at a finite God. (3)

C. Appears in the province of early Christian history, in the rejection by Marcion of the idea of the Creator-God.(3)(4)

D. The re-appearance of the idea some five centuries after Epicurus in the dualism of Manichaeus, a Persian of the third century A.D. (4)

II. IT IS ONLY IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY HOWEVER, THAT WE FIND THE IDEA GAINING REAL PROMINENCE IN THOUGHT.

A. Voltaire (1694 - 1778) - hardly more than a statement of his own belief. (5-6)

1. Some contradictory elements in Voltaire's view of matter; but, accepting either of the alternatives which he offers, we come to a finite God. (5)

2. God's benevolence saved at the expense of His omnipotence. (5)

B. Rousseau (1712 - 1778) - here also hardly more than a statement of his own belief. (6-7)

1. His doctrine of two substances, matter and mind. (7)

2. God benevolent but not omnipotent. (7)

C. Hume (1711 - 1776) - The first clear and definite discussion of the problem. (7-12)

1. Spirit of the times conducive to this type of thinking. (7-8)

2. The theory as viewed negatively and affirmatively in Hume's writings through the discussion of Cleanthes and Philo. (9-11)

3. However, the question of whether Hume himself really held to this view, as expounded in his Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, is dependent on our solution of the identity of the characters in that work. (9)

a. I here defend the Cleanthes-Hume hypothesis, with the consequent suggestion that Hume's own belief is in a finite God. (9)

D. James Mill - the transition from the eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries. (12)

III. BUT IT IS NOT FURTHER DEVELOPED UNTIL THE EARLIER PART OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY. THE TRACING OF THE IDEA DURING THE CENTURY AND A QUARTER SINCE THEN, WITH CRITICISMS BRIEF OR DETAILED, OF ITS EXPRESSION IN EACH OF ITS EXPONENTS.

A. John Stuart Mill - in whom we find the first detailed defence of the theory. (12-23)

1. Causal connection from Hume through James Mill to J. S. Mill. (12)

2. Mill's philosophy and the prevailing philosophy of the times. (13)

a. His hedonism, and that of Hume, as bearing on his thinking here.

3. Detailed exposition of Mill's defence. (13-18)

4. Criticism.

   a. Based, as also was Hume's

      (1) on purely hedonistic ideal. (18-19)

      (2) on a false view of omnipotence. (19-20)

   b. Their conclusion is a "vacating" of, the problems (20-21)

      (1) and leaves no Weltanschauung possible for them. (21-22)

B. William James. (24-29)

   1. Directly influenced by J. S. Mill. (24)

   2. His theory of a finite God results from his "radical empiricism", as he chooses to designate it. (24)

   3. Less concerned with proving finite God in his thinking, than he is with developing the relation of that God to the world. (25-26)

      a. Such an approach naturally appeals to our thought, BUT (26)

      b. Is it true? (26-28).

   4. Criticism of some of the specific and novel details of James's view. (28-29)

C. F. C. S. Schiller - from the standpoint of pluralism and a humanistic pragmatism (30-33)

   1. A clearer expression than in James, and more consistently and logically developed.

2. Based on a pluralism and meliorism similar to that of James's. (32)

3. Criticisms.

a. From standpoint of power and of evil open to much the same criticism as Mill's view. (32)

b. Further criticism of Schiller's view of personality. (32-33)

D. R. B. Perry - from the standpoint of American neo-realism. (33-35)

1. Were there no other arguments, that from the problem of evil alone would lead Perry to a finite God. (33)

2. The relation of such a view to individualism. (34)

3. The practical implications of his view. (34)

4. Criticism - on essentially the same ground as of the preceding views. (34-35)

E. G. H. Howison - from the standpoint of spiritual or personalistic atomism. (35-38)

1. A unique setting for God finite. (35)

a. All spirits in a true sense infinite - "alike eternal, ultimate irreducible realities". (35)

(1) God the ideal standard by which they measure themselves, and not the creator. (36)

2. Belief in an ultimate world-order - and its relation to freedom. (36-37)

a. God as Creator would eliminate freedom. (36)

3. Criticism of the details of Howison's argument. (36-38)

F. J. McT. E. McTaggart - also from standpoint of personalistic atomism. (38-39)

1. Has certain points in common with Howison, but (38)

2. Places God on a much lower scale in the universe of selves; indeed, ultimately seems to do away with him altogether. (38-39).

G. L. T. Hobhouse. (39-41)

1. While his philosophical system very different from that of James, (39)

2. His theory of God is quite similar. (39-41)

a. God as no more than a factor in the whole of things. (40)

H. Hastings Rashdall. (41-43)

1. His theory of a finite God in outstanding contrast to those hitherto advanced, and is by far the most tenable, having many points in common with the view of Bishop McConnell. (41-42).

2. God's ethical perfection cannot be questioned; his limitation is only from the standpoint of power, and yet "we can still call him omnipotent in the sense that He possesses all the power there is". (42-43)

I. H. G. Wells, who has given the theory its status in the popular thought of the day. (43-50)

1. Two lines of descent back to Hume. (44)
   a. Through Wm. James, J. S. Mill and James Mill,
   b. Through Samuel Butler.
2. Mr. Wells's whole discussion more of a polemic against any and all existing forms of religion. (45-46)
   a. Much of this can be explained psychologically in the light of his own earlier experience.
3. Brief outline of his theory. (46-48)
   a. Distinguishes between God the Creator and God the Redeemer. (46)
      (1) His position toward the former as one of "complete agnosticism"; toward the latter, one of "entire faith".

b. God growing and struggling "even as you and I". (47)

4. Practical implications of his theory. (48-49)

5. Further criticisms. (49-50).

J. The view is it is found in periodical literature of England and America. (50-59)

1. Sir Oliver Lodge in the Hibbert Journal (1911) (50-52).

a. Based on the reality of evolution and progress in the universe; and on the creation of free creatures.

2. H. A. Overstreet in the Hibbert Journal (1913). (52-53)

a. Grows out of the new conception of society (democracy), and changes in biological thought. Only this new conception of God will be "consistent with the spirit of evolutional democracy."

3. H. W. Wright in the American Journal of Theology (1907) (53-54)

a. Must have a limited God if we are to retain the meaning of "that moral struggle which from the point of view of ethics constitutes the heart and core of human life."

4. Kawaguchi Ukichi in the American Journal of Theology. (1915). (54-56)
    a. Religion and ethics demand a conception of God in terms of evolutionary experience. God, on the basis of an evolutionary reality, must be conceived of in terms of change and growth.
5. F. H. Foster in the American Journal of Theology. (56-59).
    a. A view growing out of a consideration of Bergson's philosophy of change. God, therefore, by his very nature "not a static but a progressing Being".

K. E. H. Reeman. A popular expression of the idea of a finite God from the clergyman's point of view. (59-67)

1. A plea for the restatement of religion in terms of "democratic outreach". Democracy the negation of monarchy in religion as well as in politics. (60-61) (63-64)
2. The problem of human suffering as it leads to a limited God. (61-63) (66-67).
3. The practical implications of this belief.

4. Criticism of this form of development of the idea; over against which we place our idea of a self-limited God.(66-69)

IV. CONCLUSION. THE MOST SIGNIFICANT EXPOSITION OF THE BELIEF IN A LIMITED GOD, - THAT OF BISHOP F. J. MCCONNELL; WITH WHICH ARE INCLUDED SOME CRITICISMS AND OUR OWN CONCLUSION CONCERNING THAT BELIEF. (69-107).

A. Factors, historical and contemporary, which lead us to face our problem.(69-71)

B. Those limitations of God which seem really to limit him, but are not, however, due to external powers or forces, but are an outgrowth of his own nature.(88-89)

1. Those growing out of the relation of God to the Creation of an external material universe. These are "such and such only as wisdom calls for",(74-81)

a. God and space.(74-75)

b. God and time.(75-77)

c. God and physical evil, leading to(79-79)

d. The requirements of system as system.(79-80)

e. The best as always binding the free chooser. (80-81)

2. Those growing out of God's relation to the world of men, and the problem of human freedom. (81-89)

   a. The problem of omnipotence. Human choices as conditioning divine activity. (82-83)

   b. The problem of omniscience. (83-85)

      (1) The most tenable solution here lies in a view like James's "Divine Chess-player".

   c. "The bonds of creatorship". Limitations of membership in moral society, and those of a holiness of his own nature which is worthy of a responsible God. (85-89)

      (1) God's relation to prayer. In the answered prayer God must be true to: (87-88)

         (a) The petitioner.

         (b) All others who compose the family of God.

         (c) Himself.

      (2) Man cannot work alone, and God's work is different when the human mark is upon it. (88-89)

3. Those inherent in the divine personality itself. (89)

a. God's "irresistible impulse to self-expression".

C. Those limitations of God which are customarily considered as real limitations, but which prove themselves to be rather of a formal character. (89-97)

1. The question of the absoluteness of God. (90-91)
2. The relation of the doer to the deed done. (91)
3. The relation of God to a "course that requires purposeful action according to reason". (91)
4. The universe as God's tool. (91-92)
5. The relation of God to law in the universe. (92-93)
6. God and the evolutionary process. (93)
7. God and the church. (93-94)
8. The relation of all personality to the law of development. (94-95)
9. God and the question of that true personality which comes only as an outgrowth of moral struggle. (95-96)
10. God and the divine and human methods of knowing. (96)

11. God and the "tightness" of personality as we know it. (96-97).

D. The new vs. the old theology, as regards these elements which would at one time have been considered evidences of an unlimited God, but which, if we were now to hold to them, would limit God. (97-101)

1. The old idea of forgiveness and salvation (97-98)
2. An infallible revelation. (98-99)
3. Exclusiveness of immortality. (99-100)
4. The divine impassibility. (100-101)

E. In addition to Bishop McConnell's defence of the finite God theory, there is but one more approach which we must consider in order to make our theory reasonably complete.

1. That of Professor E. S. Brightman. (102-104)
   a. Growing out of a well-rounded theory of moral obligation, and
   b. Which is itself in accordance with historical Christianity.

F. Conclusion. (104-107)

1. Therefore, of the existent God views, the finite God best answers the intellectual and ethical demands of our natures, and is most in accordance with the facts of reality as we know them.

THE THEORY OF A FINITE GOD IN PHILOSOPHY FROM HUME TO THE PRESENT

Epictetus, the old Roman Stoic, was a rather keen analyst of human nature. Speaking at one point in his Discourses of a tendency common to mankind, he says most aptly, "As for us, we behave like a herd of deer; when they flee from the huntsman's feathers in affright, which way do they turn? What haven of safety do they make for? Why, they rush upon the nets, and thus they perish by confounding what they should fear with that wherein no danger lies."(1) If the analogy be permitted, may not even philosophers ofttimes become so entangled as to be compelled to tarry there, held captive within the bounds of a theory from whose narrow confines freedom becomes singularly difficult, if not actually impossible. It is toward such meshes, such nets in the theistic forests that so many of the advocates of the now fashionable theory of a finite God must needs find themselves heading.

This doctrine of a finite God is itself far from a new one. If we are to affirm as Hume affirmed

---

(1) Selections from the Discourses of Epictetus (Geo. Long tr.), p. 70.

in his Natural History of Religion, and as subsequent writers have agreed, that all monotheistic beliefs had their genesis in polytheism, we shall have a finite God implicit in the very origin of religious thinking. Each god of polytheism was only a primus inter pares in the midst of all the shapers of the great world's fate; his power was necessarily limited by his fellow-gods or by the world about him. Even with one god singled out and placed on an almost imcomparably higher plane, there still remained the community of gods, and the tangible world.

With the gradual evolution of thought, there came more enlightened, more rationally builded conceptions of Deity. The gods who had been everywhere in the world of man, struggling with man, with companion-gods, and even with the great universe-force itself, were given a different place in the cosmical scale. Difficulties loomed before the minds of the ancient thinkers, and the power of the gods came to be conceived in quite a new fashion. Even in that age we find the leaders of thought confronted with the problem of theodicy.

It was by Epicurus, the philosopher of Gargettos, (ca 432-270 B.C.) that the problem was given its classic expression: "Is God willing to prevent

evil, but not able? then is he impotent. Is he able but not willing? then is he malevolent. Is he both able and willing? whence then is evil?"(1) This riddle he solved for himself by his postulate that Deity had no hand in the governance of things, else why should we have a world full of evils - "barren deserts, arid mountains, deadly marshes, uninhabitable zones ------ briars and thorns, tempests, hailstorms and hurricanes, ferocious beasts, diseases and premature deaths"(2)? Deity, enjoying a state of absolute repose in a far-off home, "is unmoved by the miseries of humanity"?(3) nor can there be "magic divination, miracles, or any kind of intercourse"(4) between it and us. So we find that even among the ancients a finite God, growing out of the contemplation of the evils - in this instance physical - existing in the world, was not unknown.

Limitation of time and space do not permit us here to enter upon too detailed discussion of the early evolution of the theory; we shall be able only to touch upon several of the divergent interpretations of it. In the province of Christian

---

(1) Quoted by D. Hume, Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, Part X, P. 266
(2) Weber, History of Philosophy, P. 137.
(3) op. cit., p. 137
(4) ibid, P. 137

history, we find such a thinker as Marcion[1] rejecting the idea of God as Creator. The Christian God for him became a moral power, working and struggling in a world for which he was not responsible. The implications of this view we shall discuss in connection with its more detailed development in contemporary thought. A signal development from a different aspect is the dualistic one of Manicheism, through Manichaeus, a Persian of the third century A.D.,[2] who advocated dual kingdoms, one of Light (or Good) and one of Darkness (or evil), with the ruler of each necessarily limited by that of the other. This view, in which we find an emphasis on moral evil as well as physical, today holds interest for us only because of its historical significance; although in J. S. Mill's Autobiography it is interesting to note that he makes the statement that had his father, also a believer in a finite God, known of this solution, it is the one towards which his thinking would have most inclined.

We must content ourselves with this brief survey of these more salient forms which the doctrine assumed in earlier times, and now make a chronological

---

(1) Arrived in Rome ca. 140 A.D. Definite date of his birth and death not known.
(2) Born 216 A.D. Put to death between 274-277 A.D.

leap over into the period of the earlier modern philosophy, where we again find the theory gaining currency.

In the study of the eighteenth century philosophers several interesting expressions of the belief in a finite God come to light. First, perhaps, comes that of Voltaire, whose much earlier predecessor, Epicurus, we find so eminent an historian of philosophy as Professor Weber characterizing as "this Socrate double d'un Voltaire".(1) Voltaire's doctrine of God and matter was no doubt occasioned by his contemplation of the evil to individuals involved by an order of nature according to law. His primary belief lies in a God who is benevolent, who is good. However, as he views the suffering about him, he becomes convinced that this God is not, can not be omnipotent. God must overcome a sort of unceasing opposition, which opposition he ascribes to eternally existing matter. But, in another connection Voltaire ascribes the creation of matter to God, which, of course, is in contradiction with the theory of eternally existing matter, upon which his conception of a finite God rests. Even on this latter theory, however, he might retain his belief in a finite God, by holding that God's wisdom was necessarily limited when he set about his task of

---

(1) Weber, op. cit., p. 135.

(1) Weber, op. cit., p. 152.

creation; he did the best he could; and now like the boy who becomes a man and ungratefully enters into battle against his father, matter, the created of God, attains such power as to stand in fundamental opposition to its maker. Voltaire did not, in any real sense, develop his theory beyond its mere suggestion; therefore we shall pass over further discussion of it, and view the theory as it existed in a contemporary fellow-countryman of Voltaire's, Jean Jaques Rousseau (1712-1788).

Rousseau derived his religion not from the contemplation of the purposive in nature nor from the harmony of nature; rather it came to him as an immediate necessity of feeling. In view of the very divergent methods of Voltaire and Rousseau, it is almost surprising to us to find the two men arriving at identical conclusions concerning the finiteness of God. But, like Voltaire, Rousseau hardly more than formulated his theory. His clearest expression of it is, I believe, in the reply which he made on Nov. 18, 1762 to the "charge to the clergy" of M. Beaumont, the archbishop of Paris.(1) Here he tells of his attempt to think his way through the different systems which presented themselves to his mind, and to make his

---

(1) "J. J. Rousseau á Christophe de Beaumont". Ouvres, Tome X, pp. 3-135, also in a letter written to M----, Jan. 15, 1769.

own the one involving the fewest difficulties. In formulating his system as a whole, he finds that his concept of God as good is to him a greater concept than that of God as omnipotent. Therefore, he does not permit his experience of the suffering in the world to destroy his belief in a good God. This he accomplishes through the doctrine of the two substances, matter and mind. His assumption is that matter imposes limits to the carrying out of divine ends; this matter, not created, but already existing and perhaps eternal, is ordered according to certain laws. It is God who thus orders and guides towards the best; but this God is not and can not be omnipotent. As with Voltaire, so with Rousseau, this theory occupied only a minor place in the whole of his philosophy.

The real recognition of the idea of God as finite first comes to us in the thought of the Scottish philosopher, David Hume (1711-1766) who enjoyed intimate friendship with Rousseau for many years, until Rousseau's fiery disposition made that friendship no longer possible. In the half century just ending we see a general progress of causes leading up to the clear and definite statement of the problem which comes in Hume. Bacon and Locke had made their

great contributions to philosophy; the empirical spirit, which later attained the height of its eighteenth century prominence in Hume, was arising. Progress there was and had been, though slow, in science. The world of thought had been for a brief time almost deluged with Spinozistic pantheism and a reaction was inevitable. So it was that the time was most auspicious for the rekindling of the tiny flame which has since grown to bonfire proportions - the idea of a finite God.

In Hume again we have a philosopher in whose philosophy the theory of a finite God is not generally treated. He has, however, devoted several of his works notably the Natural History of Religion(1) and the Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion(2) to a discussion of the problems of religious belief. It is with the latter of these works that we are at present primarily concerned. There are in the Dialogues three characters - Philo, with his "careless scepticism"; Cleanthes, with his "accurate philosophical turn"; and Demea, with his "rigid

---

(1) London, 1757.
(2) Probably written around 1749. Hume, in a letter to Gilbert Elliot of Minto (Mar. 10, 1751) speaks of his criticism of the first draft of the Dialogues; and in another connection tells us he "kept the manuscript by him for twenty-seven years". They were not published, however, until 1779 - three years after their author's death.

inflexible orthodocy". Concerning the question as to whether Cleanthes or Philo represents the real opinion of the philosopher Hume himself, there is great difference of opinion. The Dialogues were published posthumously, so the only means we have of solving the identity of the characters, is through a study and comparison of Hume's works in their relations to the content of the Dialogues. Such a study of those works, of his letters which have been preserved for us, and of the biographies of that philosopher has led me to the opinion - many of the honorable divines of his century as well as the critics of later centuries "to the contrary notwithstanding"![1] - that it is in the person of Cleanthes that we find Hume's own final beliefs. If that conclusion be not erroneous, we may assuredly credit Hume with being the first real advocate of the finite-God hypothesis, though he never really developed in its full detail the theory which he adumbrated.

The question is resolved in Part X of the Dialogues[2] by Philo who says to Cleanthes, "Epicurus' old questions are yet unanswered"[3] - a subject for discussion of which Cleanthes speaks as "worthy of a

---

(1) Huxley in his Hume (p.143), Höffding in his History of Modern Philosophy (p.438), and Pringle-Pattison in his Idea of God (pp. 20-21) maintain the Philo-Hume hypothesis vs. the Cleanthes-Hume hypothesis which I defend.
(2) pp. 263-268.
(3) op. cit., pp. 266, 267.

noble spirit of opposition and controversy."[1] After some preliminary statements by both disputants, the argument begins in earnest in Part XI.[2] Cleanthes scruples not to allow that he has "been apt to suspect the frequent repetition of the word 'infinite' to savor more of panegyric than of philosophy";[3] and that any purposes of reasoning, and even of religion would be better served were we to rest contented with more accurate and more moderate expressions. A criticism of Demea, who would abandon all human analogy and thus "abandon all religion and retain no conception of the great object of our adoration"[4] follows; after which Cleanthes boldly grasps the other horn of the dilemma. "If we preserve human analogy", says he, "we must forever find it impossible to reconcile any mixture of evil in the universe with infinite attributes; much less can we ever prove the latter from the former. But supposing the author of nature to be finitely perfect, though far exceeding mankind; a satisfactory account may then be given of natural and moral evil, and every untoward phenomenon be explained and adjusted-----A less evil may

---

(1) op. cit., pp. 226, 267.
(2) Hume, op. cit., pp. 263-274.
(3) ibid., 263.
(4) ibid., 269.

then be chosen in order to avoid a greater: inconveniences be submitted to, in order to reach a desirable end: And, in a word, benevolence, regulated by wisdom and limited by necessity, may produce just such a world as the present".(1) Philo is asked for his opinion of the theory just stated, whereupon Cleanthes finds him in disagreement with it. Philo's view is, as he expresses it, this: "The true conclusion is, that the original source of all things is entirely indifferent to all these principles; and has no more regard to good above ill, than to heat above cold, or to drought above moisture, or to light above heavy. There may four hypotheses be framed concerning the first causes of the universe: that they are endowed with perfect goodness; that they have perfect malice; that they are opposite, and have both goodness and malice; that they have neither goodness nor malice. Mixed phenomena can never prove the two former unmixed principles, and the uniformity and steadiness of general laws seem to oppose the third. The fourth, therefore, seems by far the most probable".(2) So it is that in the Dialogues we have both a splendid and concise statement of the theory of a finite God and an opponent view. Certain it is that Hume best

---

(1) ibid., 269.
(2) ibid., 273.

expressed for his century the theory; and in the light of the available data, I hold it as my opinion that this is his own belief as well, withal frankly recognizing that whether or not we may credit Hume himself with the belief in a finite God depends wholly upon our solution of the problem behind the Dialogues,--- is it to Cleanthes or to Philo that we may attribute the real conclusions of Hume, the philosopher?(1)

From Hume to the first nineteenth century exponent of the theory is but a short step with only one mediator. John Stuart Mill develops the idea of a finite God throughout his series of essays on religion,(2) likewise posthumously published. The idea was one which the elder Mill, who had been profoundly influenced by Hume, had inculcated in him from his childhood. J. S. Mill tells us, speaking of his father in the Autobiography,(3) "He found it impossible to believe that a world so full of evil was the work of an Author combining infinite power with perfect goodness and righteousness". It is hardly to be wondered at that a youth educated by the elder Mill until his fourteenth year and throughly schooled in agnosticism, should develop in his maturer years this principle which in his earlier years had become so organic to his thinking.

---

(1) cf. above.
(2) J. S. Mill, Three Essays on Religion
(3) Ch. II, Par. 2.

Mill's philosophy, in which we find the first detailed defence of a finite God, was partly an adaptation of the empiricism and phenomenalism of Hume, and in fundamental agreement with Comtian positivism in denying all knowledge of an Absolute; it was likewise an attempt to combat the idealistic method of reaching God which had been so prevalent in Hegel and in Schelling. Mill looked about him and saw as he expresses it, that "Nature impales men, breaks them as if on the wheel, casts them to be devoured by wild beasts, burns them to death, crushes them with stones like the first Christian martyrs, starves them with hunger, freezes them with cold, poisons them by the quick or slow venom of her exhalations, and has hundreds of other hideous deaths in reserve such as the ingenious cruelty of a Nabi or a Domitian never surpassed. All this Nature does with the most supercilious disregard both of mercy and of justice".(1) But Nature is not wholly thus; although it has this destructive aspect, "the destroying agencies are a necessary part of the preserving agencies",(2) and there is evidence of design in the universe. "The indication ----- points to the creation, not indeed

---

(1) J.S. Mill, Three Essays on Religion, p. 29
(2) op. cit., p. 185

---

(1) J.S. Mill, Three Essays on Religion, p. 99
(2) op. cit., p. 185

of the universe, but of the present order of it, by an Intelligent Mind whose power over the materials was not absolute, whose love for his creatures was not his sole actuating inducement, but who nevertheless desired their good".(1) In fact, Mill has taken this very argument from design in itself as opposing a belief in an infinite Being. "It is not too much to say that every indication of Design in the cosmos is so much evidence against the omnipotence of the Designer",(2) for design is equal to contrivance and contrivance is equal to the adaptation of means to an end. Thus the need of employing means "is a consequence of the limitation of power".(3) Wisdom and contrivance are shown in overcoming difficulties, and there is no room for them in a Being for whom no difficulties exist. "The evidences.....distinctly imply that the author of the cosmos worked under limitations; that he was obliged to adapt himself to conditions independent of his will, and to attain his ends by such arrangements as those conditions admitted of..... There is no reason in Nature to suppose that this Being made matter or force or any of their properties.

---

(1) ibid.,p. 242
(2) ibid.,p. 176
(3) ibid.,p. 177

Rather out of these materials he had to construct a world".(1) "The limitation of his (the Creator's) power probably results either from the qualities of the material - the substances and forces of which the universe is composed not admitting of any arrangement by which his purpose might have been more completely fulfilled, or else, the purpose might have been more fully attained, but the Creator did not know how to do it; creative skill, wonderful as it is, was not sufficiently perfect to accomplish his purposes more thoroughly.....It needs no showing that the power, if not the intelligence, must be so far superior to that of man as to surpass all human estimate. But from this to omnipotence and omniscience there is a wide interval, the distinction being of great practical importance".(2) "Omnipotence therefore cannot be predicated of the Creator on the grounds of natural theology. The fundamental principles of natural religion as deducted from the facts of the universe negative his omnipotence. They do not, in the same manner exclude omniscience.....neither is there anything to prove it".(3) "While we confine ourselves to natural religion we must rest content with a creator less than the Almighty". In a contemplation of the world about us, we see the

---

(1) ibid., 177
(2) op. cit., p. 176
(3) ibid., p. 184

existence of evil and misery, which have to bear on our idea of God. We now pass to the moral attributes of the Diety - what indication Nature gives of the purposes of its author. "The question bears a very different aspect to us from what it bears to those teachers of natural theology who are incumbered with the necessity of admitting the omnipotence of the Creator. We have not to attempt the impossible problem of reconciling infinite benevolence and justice with infinite power[1] in the creator of such a world as this. The attempt to do so not only involves absolute contradiction in an intellectual point of view but exhibits to excess the revolting spectacle of a jesuitical defence of moral enormities".[2] "These, then, are the net results of natural theology on the question of divine attributes. A Being of great but limited power, how or by what limited we do not know nor can we even conjecture; of great and perhaps unlimited intelligence, but perhaps also more narrowly limited than his power; who desires and pays some heed to the happiness of his creatures, but who seems to have other motives of action which he cares more for, and who can hardly be supposed to have

---

(1) Note the similarity to Hume's phraseology.
(2) Mill, op. cit., p. 186

created the universe for that purpose alone. Such is the Deity whom natural religion points to, and any idea of God more captivating than this comes only from human wishes or from the teaching of either real or imaginary revelation".(1)

Now that Mill has rid himself of the "mass of moral contradictions which the deluded worshipper was compelled to swallow", he goes on, quite in accordance with his utilitarianism, to express the implications of such a view. "One elevated feeling this form of religious idea admits of, which is not open to those who believe in the omnipotence of the good principle in the universe, i.e., the feeling of helping God, of requiting the good he has given by a voluntary co-operation which he, not being omnipotent, really needs, and by which a somewhat nearer approach may be made to his purposes.....To do something during life, on even the humblest scale if nothing more is within reach, towards bringing this consummation ever so little nearer, is the most animating and invigorating thought which can inspire a human creature; and that it is destined, with or without supernatural sanctions to be the religion of the future, I cannot entertain a doubt." (2) Such is Mill's development

---

(1) ibid., 194
(2) J.S. Mill, op. cit., p. 256. (Conclusion of Essay III) He also states this view, in almost identical words, in a letter to Robert Barclay Fox, written in 1841. cf. Caroline Fox's Diaries, Vol. II, p. 206.

of this view, sketched in relative detail, for it is here in Mill that it is really first given a position of fundamental importance in the modern period. Since in Voltaire, Rousseau and Hume it was hardly more than a suggestion, it is with Mill that our real criticism must begin, not however neglecting his immediate predecessor Hume.

In Mill, as in Hume, there was the basic hedonistic assumption underlying all his thought. The frequent mention of "happiness" throughout Hume's works, and especially in connection with his discussion of theological questions, and Mill's careful development of his utilitarianistic doctrines, the principle of pleasure as being the ruling motive of life, the subordinating of the real values and ideals of life to that principle, are contributing factors in the building of both Hume and Mill's belief in a finite God. Of course, no one of us can look about him and see a perfect universe, if perfection means for us no more than undiluted enjoyment. As Professor Pringle-Pattison once said, "We degrade it to a child's paradise in so conceiving it. It is not perfect in the sense that there is no evil in it; for it is equally childish to imagine that Good can exist for a finite creature except as the conquest of

evil".[1] If we are to think of happiness at all, it is rather that kind of happiness of which we are told in the closing paragraph of George Eliot's Romola; "We can only have the highest happiness, such as goes along with being a great man, by having wide thoughts and much feeling for the rest of the world as well as for ourselves; and this sort of happiness often brings so much pain with it, that we can only tell it from pain by its being what we should choose before enything else, because our souls see it is good". The pleasure idea, the purely hedonistic ideal, then, in both Hume and Mill, seems to me to lie at the root of their argument for a finite God, and if they will have no reference to the realm of something objectively higher and better, to the realm of intrinsic worths, to the ideal values in the universe, of course the existence of suffering in that universe will ever make it impossible for them to believe in the benevolence of an infinite God. They must retain the idea of divine benevolence in order to have any foundation at all for their ethical lives, so God becomes for them seriously limited in power. They have but thesis and antithesis; to their restricted vision no synthesis is possible.

This view defended by both Hume and Mill is likewise defective in its way of conceiving the attribute of omnipotence in Deity. This idea of mere

---

(1) A. Seth Pringle-Pattison, The Idea of God, p. 407.

power is the crudest and earliest predicate of the divine. The concept of All-powerful is predicated of God by men long before that of All-good, and this power is thought of in terms of physical force. Indeed, it means ofttimes no more than "able to do anything". But as man himself rises in the moral scale, ethical considerations begin to creep in; the ethical attributes begin to take their place in our conception of God, and difficult problems arise. A struggle ensues;then some philosophers, here Hume and Mill, step in and settle the quarrel by eliminating one of the contestants, power or omnipotence. They do not realize that it is perhaps their view of omnipotence which has been at fault. They end the conflict by doing away with it entirely, and their solution becomes rather,- as Borden P. Bowne was so fond of saying - a mere "vacating" of the problem. When we really come to study it how crude an idea it becomes! God is given only limited power and foresight, say the defenders of this theory. Let them only look about their world then. How legion are the ills, the faults of construction which even man, with his relatively very limited intelligence might have avoided. And if God be really responsible for these, his understanding surely cannot be as great as that of some of

his creatures, who, it seems, would have had greater foresight. Thus man's Maker becomes quite inferior to man; why, therefore, have him at all? Man has gone so far in dispensing with God; why cannot he go the whole way? That God may, because of the intrinsic values of his own nature, limit himself, is not even considered; they must have something else to limit him - matter, force, or a baker's dozen of assorted other things. Mill criticized those who sought for the solution of the problem as tending towards the older dogmatism; but was his assertion that the problem never could be solved any less dogmatic?

This very evasion of the real problem by Hume and Mill leaves us with what seems to me to be a greater problem. By making God after their fashion finite we reach no real Weltanschauung, no satisfactory world view. Has God undergone a process of evolution until he reached his present high state; has he come into it as he now is? We might think of any number of questions concerning his origin and existence. Such a finity implies something wholly extraneous, something more ultimate, and we wonder what this is. Perhaps we ask the question of our childhood, "Who made God?"; certain it is our minds must enquire concerning the basic world-ground.

We become hopelessly lost in a fundamental dualism,[1] or pluralism which leads we know not where. God not only is not infinite, he is not ultimate. We find ourselves - if I may be permitted the use of the expression - with a penultimate, or antepenultimate deity. Such an expression of a finite God as we have here fails to recognize the fact that if we are to think rightly about our world, we must sometime in our thinking come to a Grenzbegriff - an ultimate principle, (which, as theists, we call God) explained by nothing but which explains[2] all else about it. That, I believe, is one of the defects of much of the theorizing about a finite God both in the time of Hume and Mill, and the earlier thinkers, and at the present time as well. We are left, suspended, as it were, in mid-air with only a fraction of a world view, which is of course, a contradiction in terms, and therefore no world view at all.

The argument from practical effect, to which Mill gave such prominence, we shall discuss in a later connection where it is even more evident.[3] There are other criticisms which might be offered of Mill's view, a few of which we shall only touch upon here.

---

(1) cf. that of Mr. H. G. Wells.
(2) i.e., within certain limits!
(3) cf. under Wm. James and H. G. Wells.

Mill lived at the height of the wave of naturalism in theology, which as we now see was only a fragment in the higher whole of an adequate world view. His whole interpretation in the light of that naturalism was therefore inadequate. There is but one further point which I should like to suggest in this connection - a point the justice of which may be questioned; nevertheless, I put it forth here as a speculation which is at least possible. Not infrequently it seems to me that much of a man's philosophy may be understood in the light of his whole life and thinking. Mill had been reared in an atmosphere where naturalism and a limited God reigned supreme; might not his later elaborate defence of the theory have been almost what James Harvey Robinson has popularly called the "rationalization"(1) of that earlier belief? While the genesis of the idea would not affect its value in itself, nevertheless the process of tracing the causal connection of ideas is interesting, and I am inclined to wonder if Mill would have reached this conclusion independently.

---

(1) Cf. his The Mind in the Making Robinson deals, however, primarily with the rationalization of our desires. Prof. E. S. Brightman, in his recently published Introduction to Philosophy, (p. 9), makes an even more fruitful suggestion - i.e., that concerning the equally or more important rationalization of our antipathies.

But however he himself arrived at his results, certain it is that he tremendously influenced other thinkers, the first of whom is William James. Again it may be interesting to note the thought connection. We see that in James's Pragmatism, in which is his best development of the finite God idea, the author has acknowledged his great indebtedness to his predecessor, Mill, by dedicating this volume - "To the memory of John Stuart Mill, from whom I first learned the pragmatic openness of mind, and whom my fancy likes to picture as our leader were he alive today." Jame's idea of God as finite results from a general view of the universe which he chooses to designate as radical empiricism, and from his pluralism which, as he says, "best agrees with the pragmatic temper". His conception of the world is as "growing not integrally but piecemeal by the contributions of its various parts"(1) - "a strung along unfinished world in time". His view is fundamentally a protest against the old "block-universe" idea, and leads to the assertion that evil is not just a mere appearance; that the human will is creative, and that there is reality to history. To reach an idea of God consonant with this view, he falls back on the hypothesis of a

---

(1) James, Pragmatism, p. 290.

finite God, whom we must clearly distinguish from the Absolute. God cannot be the All; he is rather "one of the eaches",(1) "finite either in power or in knowledge, or in both at once",(2) and "having an environment, being in time, and working out a history, just like ourselves".(3) James is less concerned with proving a finite God - rather is it a necessity in his thinking - than he is with developing the relation of that God to the world. As a consequence, he elaborates in far greater detail Mill's view of the practical consequences of such a belief. Says James, "take the hypothesis seriously, and as a live one. Suppose the world's author put the case to you before creation, saying, 'I am going to make a world not certain to be saved, a world the perfection of which shall be conditioned merely, the condition being that each several agent does its own level best. I offer you the chance of taking part in such a world. Its safety, you see, is unwarranted. It is real adventure with real danger, yet it may win through";(4) thus it follows that "it is a social scheme of

---

(1) James, A Pluralistic Universe, pp. 44, 128. Cf. Pragmatism p., 264.
(2) op. cit., p. 311.
(3) ibid., p. 318.
(4) Pragmatism, p. 290.

finite God, whom we must clearly distinguish from the Absolute. God cannot be the All; he is rather "one of the eaches",(1) "finite either in power or in knowledge, or in both at once",(2) and "having an environment, being in time, and working out a history just like ourselves".(3) James is [illegible] concerned with proving a finite God - [illegible] in his thinking - than he is with developing the relation of that God to the world [illegible] consequences. He elaborates in [illegible] the practical consequences of such a [illegible]. James, [illegible] his hypothetical [illegible] one. Suppose the world's author put the case to you before creation, [illegible] not certain to be saved, a world the perfection of which shall be conditional merely, the condition being that each several agent does its own [illegible]. I offer you the chance of taking part in such a world. Its safety, you see, is unwarranted. It is a real adventure with real danger, yet it may win through".(4) thus it follows that "it is a social scheme of

---

(1) James, A Pluralistic Universe, pp. 64, 125. cf. Pragmatism p., 304.
(2) op. cit., p. 311.
(3) ibid., p. 318.
(4) Pragmatism, p. 290.

cooperative work genuinely to be done". Furthermore, (1)"may not the notion of a world already saved in toto anyhow be too saccharine to stand?.....Is no price to be paid in the work of salvation?.....Is all 'yes, yes' in the universe? Doesn't the fact of 'no' stand at the very core of life?"(2) So it is that we have before us a picture of an unfriendly universe, but one with growth going on everywhere - a universe which would most assuredly fit that "healthy-minded buoyancy" which exists in most of us. This is the view to which James gives the name, "Melioristic Theism" - a theism which he holds to be a mean "between the two extremes of crude naturalism on the one hand and transcendental absolutism on the other", and on the basis of which we find ourselves living in a "moralistic and epic kind of a universe".(3)

At first glance, James's view of such a universe is very attractive; its appeal to our active nature is tremendous. But mere appeal is not enough; we must go further, must consider its relation to truth. Of course, if we are to test it by James's criterion of truth, "it works", and is, therefore, true. But here the question arises, is not James's criterion of truth inadequate? - must there not be

---

(1) (2) op. cit., p. 295.
(3) ibid., p. 296.

some further reference to reality? Of course, we have a God whom we believe to be on our side, who is accessible to us, and whom we can help in the making of a better and finer world; but what is there to assure us that this God will ever be so? What is the source of his power? The Absolute whom James differentiates is merely the "eternally perfect spectator of the play" and so of little value either to God or to us in the struggle of life. And the further question arises - why should we struggle at all? There is not overmuch inspiration to us in merely saying our little lines, playing our little part in the spectacle of the cosmic drama, and then leaving the stage forever. We must have something more than we can find either in this "spectator" Absolute or in this struggling God. Thus we reach the same criticism of James's thinking as we did of Mill's - it gives us no adequate world view. While the spirit of conquest may be with us for the time being and we may feel rather important in our self-appointed task of helping the less - than - Almighty who couldn't help himself - to make the world really amount to something, the time is certain to come when we are to ask concerning the future; we crave the assurance that there is something more permanent to our ideal world; a feeling comes to us,

as it did to Arthur Hugh Clough, and we want to be able to say:

"It fortifies my soul to know
That, though I perish, Truth is so;
That, howsoe'er I stray and range,
Whate'er I do, Thou dost not change.
I steadier step when I recall
That, if I slip, Thou dost not fall"(1)

To give us the necessary confidence to travel well along life's way, we must have a world of ideals which is not just a "strung-along world"; a God who is more than just another fact in the great collocation of independent facts. As Professor Pringle-Pattison somewhere so aptly said, I too say, "I confess I find it impossible to reduce the universe to a mere 'and'; to conceive a being of transcendent intelligence and goodness as no more than one of the facts in the universe, seems to make it harder than ever to think of other facts as just happening to be there along with him - just happening to exist also, and getting in his way actively or passively. Admit intelligence or an ideal factor at all, and it seems impossible to conceive it otherwise than as central and all-explaining".(2) So it is that

---

(1) A. H. Clough: "With Whom Is No Variableness, Neither Shadow of Turning".
(2) The Idea of God, p. 396. However, let us recognize that this "all-explaining" of Pringle-Pattison will stumble against the problem of freedom; even taking that into consideration, though, such a view is more consonant with our universe idea.

we find James's finite God quite scant ground for any real world view. There is but one further criticism of that particular kind of a finite God which it may be well to note in this connection, and that is the one insisted upon by Professor Wright in his recently published "Student's Philosophy of Religion". "A more serious objection", says he, "would be that the hypothesis of an external God(1) has to be incorporated into the science of psychology and so to be made operative upon a plane where it does not seem properly to belong".(2)

Leaving, then, James's statement of the theory, we pass to some of the other and more numerous expressions of the belief in a finite God in the few decades just passed, notably those of the pragmatist, F. C. S Schiller; of the logical atomist or neo-realist, R. B. Perry; of the spiritual or personalistic atomists, G. H. Howison and J. McT. E. McTaggart; of L. T. Hobhouse; of Hastings Rashdall, the personal idealist; of Mr. H. G. Wells, E. H. Reeman; and lastly of Bishop F. J. McConnell, and E. S. Brightman - theories which except in the instance of Bishop McConnell, it will lie in the scope of this paper,

---

(1) as in James.
(2) Wright, op. cit., p. 379

only to outline and to criticize briefly.(1)

We shall first consider the view of Mr. F. C. S. Schiller, a contemporary of James, as it is developed in his "Riddles of the Sphinx". God is for him the unbecome and non-phenomenal cause of the world process - its Initiator. God is also the Sustainer of this process,(2) as being a factor in the interaction of the Ego and the Deity. It is only by ascribing personality to him that he can be regarded either as the Cause or Perfector of the world-process, and this personality must be conscious, not one of those "gratuitous fictions like an impersonal intelligence or unconscious purpose".(3) But this God is not the infinite, "or rather to God ..... infinite is an unmeaning epithet". "To infer the infinite from the finite is a fallacy like inferring the unknowable from the knowing and all arguments in favor of an infinite God must commit it. We argue with finite minds from finite data and our conclusions must be

---

(1) We shall also consider the expressions of the idea as it is found in periodical literature, in articles by Sir Oliver Lodge, H. A. Overstreet, H. W. Wright, Kawaguchi Ukichi, and F. H. Foster.
(2) Schiller, Riddles of the Sphinx, Chapter IX.
(3) op. cit., Ch. VII.

of like nature".[1] God is a factor in all things but cannot be all things; interaction implies a not-God to act upon God. Here it seems to me Schiller is quite in accord with our views, for must there not at least be a pluralism of selves, of which God is the creator, and yet which have their own unique individuality?[2] We insist upon ascribing, indeed must ascribe some of our human attributes to the divine, for those human attributes are all we can know. But infinity is not compatible with this. "And not only is the combination of human and infinite elements in the conception of God an outrage upon the human reason, but it leads to no less outrageous consequences from the point of view of human feeling. For by ascribing unlimited power to God, it makes God the author of all evil, and imprisons us in Hell to escape from which would be rebellion against omnipotence. To be brief, the attribute of Infinity contradicts and neutralizes all the other attributes of God, makes it impossible to ascribe to the Deity either personality or consciousness, or power, or intelligence, or wisdom, or goodness, or purpose, or object in creating the world; and infinite Deity does not effect a single one of the functions which the religious consciousness demands of God".[3]

---

(1) ibid., p. 304.
(2) Cf. our discussion of Bishop McConnell's view.
(3) Schiller, op. cit., p. 30.

Of the considerations leading up to this view of Schiller's there are several of which we must take notice. While his objection to the older conception of power is, I believe, quite correct, we find him erring greatly in his conception of personality. He cannot see how an infinite personality can allow for a distinction of finite persons, and so it is that he rejects the characteristic of infinity; nor can he see how, with an infinitely good God, the distinction between good and evil can have any meaning. But evil is a reality, thus presenting a most difficult problem to his mind, and one which leads to his statement, "Hence it is not surprising that no attempt at reconciling the divine goodness with divine power has ever been successful".(1) Briefly, then, he concludes, "Religion, philosophy, and science alike demand a belief in a personal and limited God".(2) Schiller's theory is open to much the same criticism as that of Mill's from the standpoint of the relations of power and evil. Like James's view it is based on a sort of pluralism and meliorism, but unlike James's, it seems to me, it is more logically and consistently developed. It is Schiller's view of personality which is most inadequate, for it permits him to effect no real synthesis

---

(1) (2) ibid., p. 308.

between the conflicting elements of life, and thus no satisfactory world view.

Also in accord with James's fundamental position is that of R. B. Perry, the American neo-realist, or as W. R. Sorley would prefer, the "logical atomist", who so commends James's preference for - if we borrow the poet's words - the "dome of many colored glass" to "the white radiance of eternity". Indeed, Professor Perry's whole argument follows James very closely, and his conclusion is the same. "Only by supposing that things happen without or despite his (God's) will, is it possible to exonerate God of responsibility for evil".(1) In fact, he considers this argument from evil in itself adequate to lead us to a finite God, were we to leave out of consideration all the others which have been advanced in support of this view. "It has often been objected with force that many perfections are incompatible; that it is impossible, for example, that a being without limits, a being coinciding with the totality of things, should possess mental or moral perfections; since these seem to imply a relation of the subject to something beyond itself. But the modern pluralist does not argue from any such dialectical consideration; he simply points to the

---

(1) Perry, The Present Conflict of Ideals, p. 326.

facts of evil in the world, and sets this question - would you rather have an infinite God who designed these evils, or a finite God who condemns them and opposes them as you do?"(1) The practical implications of this also appeal to Perry, for this is "not a religion for the helpless who wish to recline upon the bosom of an Almighty and leave it all to his highest and inscrutable wisdom. It is a religion for those in whom the fighting spirit is alive, and who are stonehearted enough to respond to the challenge of evil as to an enemy to be attacked and overcome".(2) The motive of individualism also finds expression in the conception of God as finite. "Just as the human individual must possess a unique inner life of his own which must always be strange and new to everyone but himself, so God also, if he is to be an individual, must remain outside the circle of every other being".(3) Thus Professor Perry bases his argument on three underlying motives: (1) it relieves God of responsibility for the evil in his universe; (2) it permits individualism, and (3) it is an appeal to manly courage. We may criticize this view on essentially the same grounds as those on which we have based our criticisms

---

(1) Perry, op. cit., p. 327
(2) ibid., p. 327
(3) ibid., p. 328.

of Mill, James, and Schiller.[1] Since there is nothing really unique or original in Perry's statement of the argument, that criticism will suffice, and we shall pass from the statement of the finite God idea as we have it in this logical atomist, to the statement of it as we find it in the spiritual or personalistic atomists, G. H. Howison and J. McT. E. McTaggart.

In Howison especially there is offered a unique setting for God finite. Howison is a pluralist, and maintains the existence of a harmonious society of minds, each self-existent, self-active, and absolutely real. This society is made up of God the perfect Being, and men the imperfect beings, who are of sufficient number to represent every degree of possible divergence from the ideal.[2] There is a great difference between God and man, but it is not that God is infinite, and man finite. Rather in a true sense are all spirits infinite, "infinity being a synonym for eternity or self-existence";[3] we must seek our distinction in the fact that "man possesses a sensuous consciousness which God lacks". None of these beings owes his existence to any other; "all are alike eternal, ultimate, irreducible realities".

---

(1) Cf. above.
(2) Limits of Evolution, pp. 353-56.
(3) Says, op. cit., p. 422, "Eternity, self-existence, self-activity, freedom and infinity are to me all interchangeable terms".

Thus God is the ideal or standard by which they measure themselves, and not their creator. Moreover, nature is not created by God but owes its reality to human minds. And yet, nature is not a multiplicity of separate, unrelated and wholly diverse worlds; nature is one because of the harmony of all spirits in the possession of a common ideal towards which they are all striving.(1) So, in his universe of eternal spirits independent of God, Howison relieves God completely from the authorship of the evil in the world. God, he says, is responsible only for the good which gradually arises in the world; and even for this good only in chief and not solely, for to every mind that promotes the good and helps to check the evil belongs indefeasibly the credit of his part in the increase of good and the decrease of evil.(2) His belief in an ultimate moral order he bases on the autonomy of the individual mind; the moral life demands freedom, and genuine freedom is not possible if God be the creator of men "any more than he be the great All, of which men are but parts or expressions". Briefly, my criticism of Howison is that I think he mistakes the real meaning of freedom in making it incompatible with creation, for his "freedom" is of

---

(1) op. cit., 325-26.
(2) ibid., p. 392.

(1) op. cit., 322-23.
(2) Ibid., p. 322.

the extremist type, existent only in realms of purest theory, and removed afar from the world of our experience. Nowhere in life is it possible to find such a "genuine freedom" as he seeks. Further, what is there to assure this ultimate moral order; how shall we arrive at any Weltanschauung by travelling in this direction? What reason is there for having any God at all? God as the central member of divine society, but a primus inter pares, meets few needs in our thinking,(1) and like the five or more equine toes of yore it is entirely conceivable that in the evolutionary march of thought, and following the universal law of disuse, that member of society may be entirely done away with. And then, lastly but perhaps most important, is it not just as difficult - if really not more difficult - to conceive of a society of eternally existing selves, as to conceive one eternally existing self as the world-ground? On the former basis I certainly can see no assurance that these eternally existing selves can ever attain to that ethical ideal set for them, for have they not already had from eternity to attain it, and is it not still infinitely far in the distance?

---

(1) Of course, it permits a part solution of the problem of evil, and provides after a fashion for the status of nature.

the extremist type, existent only in realms of pure theory, and removed afar from the world of our experience. Nowhere in life is it possible to find such a "genuine freedom" as he seeks. Further, what is there to assure this ultimate moral [illegible] of [illegible] we arrive at any [illegible] by travelling [illegible] direction? What reason is there to [illegible] at all? God as the central member of [illegible], but a [illegible], [illegible] thinking,(1) and like the [illegible] of [illegible] of yore it is entirely conceivable that in [illegible] tionary march of thought, and following the universal law of disease, that member of society may be entirely done away with. [illegible] important, is it not just as difficult - if really not more difficult - to [illegible] of [illegible] eternally existing selves, as to conceive one eternally existing self as the world-ground. On the former basis I certainly can see no assurance that those eternally existing selves can ever attain to that ethical ideal set for them. For have they not already had from eternity to attain it, and is it not still infinitely far in the distance?

---

(1) Of course, it permits a part solution of the problem of evil, and provides after a fashion for the status of nature.

But we might multiply such questions by the score and receive no satisfactory answer. Let us therefore go on and sketch briefly the views of J. McT. E. McTaggart,[1] another personalistic atomist. That the universe is one of finite selves, so far he agrees with Howison; but as to God's status in the universe, he is not in agreement with that author. In fact, we may well question whether McTaggart's view is properly to be considered under the heading of a finite God, for at a certain point in his reasoning his respect for God grows even less than that exhibited by Comte who took great pleasure in "politely bowing the Deity out of the universe". But of the possible God-hypotheses, this is least bad. The doctrine of a non-omnipotent God a "person who fights for the good and may be victorious"..."is better than the doctrine of an omnipotent person to whom good and evil are equally pleasing".[2] But this God is non-creative,[3] so why believe in him at all when we have no reason? God, if that is the term we choose to use, is decidedly finite, and, on the basis of McTaggart's reasoning, rather an otiose accompaniment in our

---

(1) As developed especially in his Some Dogmas of Religion.
(2) Some Dogmas of Religion, pp. 250 ff.
(3) op. cit., p. 260.

thinking; although, of course, says he, non-belief in him might make some difference but "only because there would be one less person to love in the universe", with a consequent slight bearing on our happiness. So, although customary classification designates McTaggart as an exponent of the finite God idea, his conclusions seem to me so negative as to do away entirely with an idea of any real God. For discussion of such theism - if theism it may be called - there hardly remains a necessity.

Another form taken by the finite-God theory is that one found in the thought of Mr. L. T. Hobhouse. While his system itself is fundamentally very different from that expounded by William James, his theory of God exhibits no such striking differences. We see purpose about us, and the existence of purpose, so far as our experience and reasoning powers permit us to go, implies a mind commensurate with that purpose.(1) Such a mind must be, therefore, a permanent and central fact in that universe - in short God. As we think of this mind one negative limitation is clear. "The mind that we are led to contemplate must neither be confused with the whole of things nor with an Omnipotent Creator of things. It is not, the whole, for mechanism - the

---

(1) Development and Purpose, p. 365.

antithesis of purpose - runs through the structure of the whole, and in dependence on mechanism, discord and evil. It is not, therefore, to be confounded with the Absolute or Unconditioned of Metaphysics. If these terms have meaning, they possess it only as applied to the whole, and in the whole Mind is only a factor. It is conditioned as its purpose is conditioned. For the same reason --- Mind --- is not the omnipotent Providence of a more elementary religious theory working at its will in a void or on a material of perfect plasticity. The reality of evil must be recognized as something very different from a mere privation of good. ------Its extent is the measure of the incompleteness of the order actually achieved by Mind in the world."(1) The callousness of nature, evil in general, is the "outcome of the blind operation of mechanical forces".(2) Thus from two opposite starting points we have arrived at the conception of "a conditioned purpose as constituting the core of the world process".(3) (1) In our analysis of thought we come upon the conception of the Reason "as an impulse to secure harmony of conceptions, an impulse which can only be finally validated by development".(4) "The analysis of the ethical consciousness

---

(1) op. cit., p. 367.
(2) (3) ibid., p. 368
(4) ibid., p. 369.

points to a goal of effort in which the harmony of all conscious life is to be attained".(1) Thus we are led to conceive the world-process as a development of organic harmony through the extension of control by Mind operating under mechanical conditions which it comes by degrees to master".(2) God or the World Mind is, therefore, finite. While Professor Hobhouse does introduce the comparatively new element of evolutional harmony, we shall not stop here for criticism of his view, for such criticism is either implicit or explicit in what has come before and what is yet to come.

Dr. Hastings Rashdall(3) is also led to a finite God by reason of the evil that is in the universe. His theory is, however, in such outstanding contrast to most of those hitherto advanced that it commends itself far more to thinking minds. For Dr. Rashdall God is he upon whom all beings are dependent.(4) We may also

---

(1) ibid., p. 369.
(2) ibid., p. 372
(3) I am taking time here only very briefly to sketch that view which he has developed in such detail. Cf. his Philosophy & Religion, pp. 79-86; his essay, "Personality, Human and Divine" in Personal Idealism, and Book III of his The Theory of Good and Evil, esp. pp. 211-246; 286-294; 335-356. While his development of the idea is worthy of far more extended treatment, his fundamental position is so much like that of Bishop McConnell's, of which later we write at length, that this outline must suffice here.
(4) For discussion of all these points, Cf. Bishop McConnell.

think of him as being responsible for the world.(1) But as we look about this world and see the vast amount of physical and moral evil in it, we cannot think that such a world would or could have been intrinsically willed by a perfectly good and perfect being such as we believe God to be.(2) Therefore this world must be but instrumental, serving in some way as means to a future end. That the present world is no better than it is, is due to the fact that God, though knowing all possible choices and their consequences, yet was so limited that, of the various choices which presented themselves, he could only take the best that seemed possible to him.(3) We cannot question his ethical perfection;(4) nevertheless, he is somehow limited, and this must be from the standpoint of power.(5) But - and here we find the essential element in Dr. Rashdall's view - these limitations were not imposed upon him from without;(6) these necessities "to which even God must submit" are parts of his essential nature. They"prevent him from willing a universe in which all the good that will ultimately be gained in this universe might have been gained without the evil which now exists". So Dr. Rashdall's conclusion is this: "We may still say, if we please, that God is infinite because he is limited by nothing outside of his own

---

(1)(2)(3)(4)(5)(6) For discussion of all these points, Cf. Bishop McConnell.

nature, except what he himself has caused.(1) We can still call him omnipotent in the sense that he possesses all the power there is".(2) Thus Dr. Rashdall at times comes very near to our viewpoint, that is, if only he were to assert that God is consciously self-limited, rather than assuming this limitation to be due to some defective necessity in his nature. But of this more later - in our discussion of the view as given its most significant expression in America through Bishop Francis J. McConnell.

Before passing, however, to that view, we must consider in relative detail the view which we find in Mr. H. G. Wells, who has done much to give the theory its status in the popular thought of the day, who has made it the common property of that manifold individual, the "man-on-the-street". Mr. Wells has developed in this theory to which, by the way, he has devoted the whole of one book(3) and parts of two earlier ones(4) a pet hobby which at times he rides hard and fast.

To one reading Mr. Well's God the Invisible King with the really serious intent of gaining positive and constructive knowledge of the subject in

---

(1) For discussion of all these points, Cf. Bishop McConnell.
(2) Rashdall, "Personality Human and Divine", in Personal Idealism, p. 85.
(3) H. G. Wells, God the Invisible King.
(4) First and Last Things, and Mr. Brittling Sees it Through.

hand - to such a one I ofttimes wonder that the same feeling does not come which Goethe once had when he had finished reading something of Lord Byron's - if we are to credit the statement of one of his biographers as true! - "Sobald er reflektiert, ist er ein Kind"!

But let us return to the definite theory with which we, in this paper, are to deal. Family trees of ideas, as well as of people must needs be of interest in any historical study. In Mr. Well's theological genealogy we find two lines of descent back to David Hume. Time and time again we find him acknowledging his intellectual and theological indebtedness to William James; and William James to John Stuart Mill;[1] and John Stuart Mill through his father to David Hume. And in reading the works of Samuel Butler (the third) one can but often be struck with the very evident similarity of ideas - a similarity ofttimes so great as to lead to the hypothesis of "borrowed ideas" on the part of Mr. Wells.[2] And if such a view of the genesis of some of Mr. Well's statements be not at fault, it is but a step from Samuel Butler to Hume as his intellectual ancestor.

---

(1) vid. the dedication of James's Pragmatism, quoted above.
(2) I notice that Professor Beckwith in his "Idea of God" (pp. 218-219) makes a like suggestion.

If we may be permitted a preliminary criticism of Mr. Wells - does not every chapter, even sometimes every page, of God the Invisible King seem to be a polemic directed against any and all existing forms of religion, rather than a logical defence of any religion at all? Usually behind such torrential attacks we find a cause, and for this cause in Mr. Well's life we need look no further than his book. His childhood conception of God was far from a joyful one, for he says of God, "He and his Hell were the nightmare of my childhood; I hated him whle I still believed in him, and who could help but hate? I thought of him as a fantastic monster, perpetually spying, perpetually listening, perpetually waiting to condemn and to strike me dead - his flames as ready as a grill-room fire. He was over me and about my feebleness and silliness as a child as the sky and sea would be about a child drowning in mid-Atlantic. When I was still only a child of thirteen, by the grace of the true God in me, I flung this lie out of my mind, and for many years, until I came to see that God himself had done this thing for me, the name of God meant nothing to me but the hideous scar in my heart where a fearful demon had been". (1) Is it to

---

(1) H. G. Wells, God the Invisible King, p. 44.

be at all wondered at that a person who had had such an experience of God would seek and accept almost any theory which was as far removed from the God of his childhood as possible? God, the infinite, transcendent and yet immanent Being, had all these connotations for Mr. Wells; quite naturally, God as a fellow-worker and striver, a sort of democratic "big-brother" individual would hold out a mighty appeal to his God-starved nature.

His theory we can no more than outline here. He makes a sharp distinction between God the Creator, the "Veiled Being", and God the Redeemer, "the Captain of mankind and of the cause of righteousness".(1) His position as regards the former is one of complete agnosticism; as regards the latter it is one of "entire faith". Our religion cannot go back to the ultimate cause of the universe; only the living forces now at work can be a part of a true religion. All theistic metaphysics is barren and bankrupt, but we have left a real religious faith which admits of a God who "is neither all-wise, nor all-powerful, nor omnipotent".(2) Thus Mr. Well's religion is wholly empirical in its outlook, and - like much attempted empiricism - narrow in its scope. His God is a person "who himself struggles in his great effort from strength to strength, and has

---

(1) op. cit., Introduction, XII.
(2) ibid., p. 24.

no spite against error", and who "far beyond halfway hastens to meet the purblind". "God comes to us within and takes us for his own; he incorporates us with his own undying experience and adventure; he receives us and gives himself. He is a stimulant; he makes us live immortally and more abundantly. I have compared him to the sensation of a dear, strong friend who comes and stands quietly beside one, shoulder to shoulder".(1) "God ..... is synthetic reality".(2) God, too, is youth with progress ahead of him, who "faces the blackness of the Unknown and the blind joys and confusions and cruelties of Life, as one who leads men through a dark jungle to a great conquest".(3) God is gathering power as he goes along for the conquest of death; every moment active and moving, but not like the accepted figure of Jesus, which "instinct with meek submission, is not in the tone of our worship".(4) "We of the new faith repudiate the teaching of non-resistance. We are the militant followers of the participators in a militant God. We can appreciate and admire the greatness of Christ, this gentle being upon whose nobility the theologians

---

(1) op. cit., p. 39
(2) ibid., p. 62
(3) ibid., p. 96
(4) ibid., p. 101.

---

(1) Op. cit., p. 80
(2) Ibid., p. 88
(3) Ibid., p. 90
(4) Ibid., p. 101.

trade. But submission is the remotest quality of all from our God, and a moribund figure is the completest inversion of his likeness as we know him". (1) We might multiply quotations and instances from Mr. Wells by the score. We read, and young and active, are perhaps for the moment almost carried away by its appeal to action, to progress, for aid in carrying out the great adventure of faith. If so, let us stop for a moment to consider whither we are going. To what end is all this progress? For the conquest of death, is the reply. But, having become conquerors, then what? And this time we receive no answer. The life of activity would conceivably cease, and what of us then? Or any number of things may happen. God isn't all-powerful, or all-wise, or all-anything. He is "even as you and I", ever struggling - struggling with might and main to conquer the dark jungles of the future. What is there to assure us that these jungles won't someday swallow up our God and us? What then? What would the struggle have availed? That is something which Mr. Wells cannot answer. No - we must have something other, something more than this God who is but a fraction more than man, even though we may not know him so well as Mr. Wells would have us know him. Rather with Tennyson -

---

(1) ibid., p. 103.

"I stretch lame hands of faith and grope
And gather dust and chaff and call
To what I feel is Lord of all,
And faintly trust the larger hope". (1)

Mr. Well's view is, I fear, too much akin to what Feuerbach calls the objectivication of his own desires,(2) and has not with it enough of the objectivity which comes with reality. In his impatience with Metaphysics as he conceives it, he forgets that there are certain intellectual demands, as that for coherence, made upon our religious attitudes. He does not(3) come in his thinking to any Grenzbegriff which is at all related with God. Rather he seems to prefer being left with an ultimate and irreconcilable duality - the God of religion and the Veiled Being, who must needs occasionally come into conflict; who must often, in some measure at least, seem to contradict each other. Indeed, he is so out spoken as to tell us that with this view he is satisfied, even while recognizing its inherent contradictions! But whether or no he will have coherence in his own thinking, the principle of coherence stands in the universe, and before its

---

(1) opening section of In Memoriam.
(2) Cf. the suggestion made above in regard to Mill - and "his rationalization of his antipathies".
(3) We arrived at the same criticism of Hume and Mill in the beginning of this paper.

judgment bar we find his theory condemned. Truth remains in spite of Mr. Wells! But we must no longer tarry here.

Before passing to a discussion of Bishop McConnell's very significant expression of the finite God idea, let us note the few brief statements of the theory which we find in British and American periodical literature of the last two decades.

In the Hibbert Journal[1] for July, 1911, Sir Oliver Lodge has written an article, "The Christian Idea of God", in which, while he does not specifically make use of either of the terms "finite" or "limited" as applied to God, he really defends such a view. "The universe is a flux, it is a becoming, it is a progress. Evolution is a reality. True and not imaginary progress is possible. Effort is not a sham. Existence is a true adventure. There is real risk.... ..",[2] he tells us. Indeed, "there was a real risk about creation - directly it went beyond the inert and mechanical. The granting of choice and free will involved a risk. Thenceforward things could go wrong. They might be kept right by main force but that would not be playing the game, that would not be loyalty to

---

(1) Hibbert Journal, IX, 697-716.
(2) op. cit., p. 714.

the conditions".(1) ".....Good is the end and aim of the Divine Being; but not without conditions. Not by compulsion. Perfection, as of machinery, would be too dull and low an achievement - something much higher is sought. The creation of free creatures who, in so far as they go right, do so because they will, not because they must - that was the divine problem, and it is the highest of which we have any conception".(2) ".....there was a real risk in making a human race on this planet. Ultimate good was not guaranteed..... .. ".(3) ".....the struggle is a real one. The effort is not confined to humanity alone; according to the Christian conception; God has shared in it.....Ay, that is the Christian conception; not of a God apart from his creatures, looking on, taking no personal interest in their behavior, sitting aloof only to judge them; but one who anxiously takes measures for their betterment, takes trouble, takes pains - a pregnant phrase, takes pains, - one who suffers when they go wrong, one who feels painfully the miseries and wrongdoings and sins and cruelties of the creatures whom he has endowed with free will; one who actively enters in to the

---

(1) ibid., p. 714.
(2) ibid., p. 715.
(3) ibid., p. 715.

storm of the conflict....."[1] That is Sir Oliver Lodge's "idea of God" - a view which, by the way, is not at all unlike that of Bishop McConnell, which we shall discuss in its detail later.

Again the Hibbert Journal for 1913[2] we have a further expression of the idea, this time, however, from the pen of an American, H. A. Overstreet. With the passing of the years, says he, new habits of social thought have been gradually replacing our old ones. There have also been significant changes in biological thought. Comparing the two, we reach the conclusion that the fundamental way of democracy; "the self-modification of the mass - life by the actions and reactions of all its members";[3] is the fundamental way of all life. Therefore, we come finally to a "philosophy fashioned in the spirit of democratic - biological ideals", which "will inevitably repudiate whatever of monarchic or oligarchic still lingers in the God - views of the present".[4][5] A great democratic society, a vast "federal union", will be the "large figure",

---

(1) op. cit., p. 715.
(2) Hibbert Journal, XI (1913), 394-411.
(3) op. cit., p. 406.
(4) ibid., p. 408.
(5) For discussion of this Cf. under Reeman's view.

"not simply of human but of cosmic society, which is to yield our God of the future. ----- There is no place in it for the figure of an eternally perfect being, and no need: no need, for the vast society by its own inherent mass - dialectic - of struggle and adaptation, co-operation and conflict - is working out its own destiny; no place, for the society, domocratic from end to end, can brook no such radical class distinction as that between a supreme Being favored with eternal and absolute perfection, and the mass of beings doomed to the lower ways of imperfect struggle ----- nor is it indeed a God, as idealistic absolutists would have it, in whom our imperfect actions vanish in perfection, but one in whom they are the means whereby, out of an imperfect present, a less imperfect future is being wrought. It is a God that in one respect is in the making, growing with the growth of the world; suffering and sinning and conquoring with it; a God, in short, that is the world in the spiritual unity of its mass - life"-----"a God in and of the total world-process".(1)

For the statement of the idea in American periodical literature we are indebted primarily, - indeed, I believe, solely, - to the American

---

(1) Overstreet, op. cit., p. 410.

Journal of Theology. In volume XI (1907) of that Journal[1] we find an article by H. W. Wright, "An Immutable Absolute or a God Who Strives?", in which he holds that the belief in an Absolute Reality, perfect and complete, which may satisfy us from the theoretical point of view is far from satisfactory to the moralist, "for it takes all meaning out of that moral struggle which from the point of view of ethics constitutes the heart and core of human life".[2] "What if we even conclude that reality must, by necessity of its nature, remain unfinished and imperfect?" He goes on further to point out that there is an important doctrine in the teachings of Christianity which is in fundamental agreement with this conception of an imperfect Reality - an idea of a suffering, self-sacrificing God, which can hardly be reconciled with the idea of infinite power and complete self-sufficiency; and further, that the "practical value of such a view is as easy to recognize as its theoretical defects".[3]

Again in Volume XIX of the American Journal we have another expression of the same view by Kawaguchi Ukichi in his article, "The Doctrine of

---

(1) American Journal of Theology, XI, pp. 128-130
(2) op. cit., p. 128
(3) op. cit., 129

Evolution and the Conception of God".[1] Mr. Ukichi arrives at his conclusion by a somewhat different route, however, than do most of his fellow defenders of the faith. He is an evolutionist, and as he says, "The evolutionary view of reality stands for the relative and finite view of all reality. God, from this evolutionary view of the world, is to be conceived in terms of change and growth, the essential characteristics of the living world with which he is vitally related."[2] "This conception of God in terms of evolutionary experience, rather than under the category of some metaphysical absolute, is demanded by our religion and ethics..... The God demanded by practical religion must be a being who shares in our struggles, conflicts, failures, successes, victories.....from the point of view of ethics we need such a God."[3] He quotes[4] with approval Höffding's words, "If Being were finished harmoniously and unchangeably, ethics would be impossible. All ethics demands that there be effort. But there would be no room

---

(1) American Journal of Theology, XIX, (1915) 550-576.
(2) op. cit., p. 570.
(3) ibid., p. 572.
(4) ibid., p. 573.

for effort if everything were in eternal and actual completeness"; [1] and concludes "But thus to bring relativity and becoming into the very being of God means, of course, that we must abandon that absolute ground of religious and ethical assurance which is believed to be given us by traditional conceptions of God as the absolute controller of the world and human life. An evolving God does not guarantee beforehand the ultimate success of our moral universe .....".[2] This alone is "a tenable conception of God in an age of evolutionary science".[3]

In the article by F. H. Foster, "Some Theistic Implications of Bergson's Philosophy" [4] we have still another expression of the belief in a finite God - and, I believe, we may consider this the clearest and best grounded defence of that idea to be found in periodical literature up to the present time. Professor Foster is apparently led to his conclusion through a consideration of Bergson's philosophy of change, to which he feels that too little attention has been given by the theologians. Certain difficulties seem to insurmountable on the old basis of an unchanging static God; we are lost

---

(1) Höffding: The Problems of Philosophy, p. 151.
(2) Kawaguchi Ukichi, op. cit., p. 573.
(3) ibid., p. 576.
(4) American Journal of Theology, XXII (1918), 274 - 299.

in a hopeless maze in the realm of causation on that basis;[1] further, how can the existence of sin and pain in the world be reconciled with the omnipotence and perfect goodness of such a God;[2] again, the static view of God directly attacks and renders - "not merely logically, but, alas, in most frequent and concrete actuality" - spiritual religion impossible,[3] for how can there be suffering in an unchanging God? It is on these bases that Foster finds himself prepared to accept the "suggestion derived from Bergson that God is himself by his very nature not a static but a progressing Being, one himself passing through an evolution,.....or essentially a Becoming",[4] and to maintain that when Bergson does speak concerning religion "he will identify the Vital Impulse directly with God".[5] "The imperfection of the Vital Impulse (that "upward moving force, imperfect in power, uncertain as to methods, struggling toward a great end, itself enlarging as it goes")[6] must be God's own imperfection, if he is morally in earnest with this world, that is, if

---

(1) op. cit., pp. 277-5.
(2) ibid., p. 278.
(3) ibid., p. 279.
(4) ibid., p. 250.
(5) ibid., p. 282.
(6) ibid., p. 282.

(1) op. cit., pp. 277-.
(2) Ibid., p. 279.
(3) Ibid., p. 279.
(4) Ibid., p. 280.
(5) Ibid., p. 282.
(6) Ibid., p. 282.

he is God".(1) The imperfections in this world necessitate, therefore, a developing World-Builder, and this necessitates a developing God. Further to defend his point, Professor Foster asks the question, Why should not power grow by exercise?; and in his reply, incorporates what Wundt formulated as a law of the universe - "spiritual energy tends to increase".(2) So, says Foster, "Now God is spiritual energy; and if this, as Wundt says, tends of its very nature to increase, then God is a Becoming by virtue of his very nature as spiritual - living".(3) Our problem here is "not one of origins but only of existence".(4) In the concluding pages of his article he attempts to answer what seems to him would be the most cogent objection to the idea of a constantly changing God; that is, that there would be tremendous difficulties involved in knowing such a God. "Knowledge of a changing reality is not uncertain or unreal, however changing, if at each point it corresponds to the reality existing at that point".(5) Indeed, he goes on to say, - and I

---

(1) ibid., p. 283.
(2) Wundt: System der Philosophie, p. 315
(3) Foster, op. cit., p. 289
(4) ibid., p. 290.
(5) ibid., p. 292.

believe rightly - when we reach bed-rock in this matter it is not God's "unchangeability" which we need but his "reliability".(1) So he concludes; "But what beauty is added even to the idea of God's glory, by the proposed view of God as Progress! Power ever increases. God, not in manifesting himself, but in doing, in exercising his powers for the good that may thereby be gained, struggles with a task at first too mighty for him..... ..... The Creator is not yet the absolutely successful Govenor of his creation".(2) We shall not pause here for criticism of this view - for much of that criticism is implied in what has come before, and the remainder will come in our discussion of Bishop McConnell's theory of a finite God, at which we shall soon arrive.

Both the Hibbert Journal and the American Journal of Theology have, therefore, been influential in popularizing this idea of a finite God which has, within the past decade especially, come to hold so prominent a place in religious thinking.

Further progress has been made in bringing the idea to the attention of that rather well-known individual, the "average man", by the Reverend Edmund H. Reeman, a Unitarian clergyman, in his book,

---

(1) ibid., p. 295.
(2) ibid., p. 298.

Do We Need a New Idea of God? - a book which, by the way, well expresses the tendency of much of the more or less superficial thought of the day. Mr. Reeman's viewpoint is quite akin to that of Mr. H. G. Wells, discussed in an earlier connection. Indeed, metaphysically, I believe his treatment of the subject has almost all the defects of Mr. Wells position in God the Invisible King; consequently, our criticism of the latter will serve somewhat as a criticism of the former as well. However, his exposition of the theory has been of not a little influence, and has in itself some value, so perhaps it will be well to consider in some detail his viewpoint.

Mr. Reeman's whole volume is a plea for a restatement of religion "in terms of democratic outreach".(1) Of this new theory we must not be afraid for "God is what he always was.....our changing conceptions do not change realities".(2) In forming a conception of God however, which is more akin to reality, we must face certain facts and correlate them with our view of God. One of these facts which seems especially to bear on the author's thinking is the Great War, in the throes of which the whole world was involved at the time he was writing his book. So he asks the question,

---

(1) Reeman; Do We Need a New Idea of God?, p. 4.
(2) op. cit., p. 12

"Can God always do the thing that needs to be done? Is he a being of both unlimited goodness and unlimited power?"(1) The answer to this must be sought, and can only be found - if at all - in the facts of life and experience as we know them. "It can hardly be disputed that we have the right to expect of an Almighty Being possessed of the power to do all things, and by nature supremely good, that he will use his power to overcome the evil, to root it out from his world, and to further goodness by every possible means. We expect so much of men, can we expect less of God?"(2) He then reverts to the subject of the Great War. "Do you mean to tell me that there is a God who could end it all tomorrow if he wished, but that he wont? I cannot believe it, and if I could I do not think I should have much use for such a God anyhow."(3) Therefore we must face the facts and reach some conclusion concerning God's relation to the world. There are four possibilities from which we can choose: "Either God is good but not omnipotent - that is, loves the good and wants to further it but is just about as helpless to sweep evil away at one stroke as we ourselves are; or that

---

(1) ibid., p. 17.
(2) ibid., p. 23.
(3) ibid., pp. 24-25.

God is omnipotent but not good - that is, has the power to destroy evil from the fact of the earth, but not the will; or again, what we call good is not the real good as God sees it (which would mean, of course, that all our notions about good and evil are entirely mistaken and that we are quite in the dark as to what real goodness actually is); or fourthly, that God has no concern with mankind and no interest in what happens to us. For the life of me I can see no other alternative that will fit the difficulty, if we are to keep the essential elements of the older ideas of God. And since I cannot escape the thought of God and am compelled to believe that in the main humanity is not mistaken in its ideas of goodness, and since I cannot believe that a God exists who is indifferent to creation and the interests of mankind, I am forced to the one conclusion left, namely, that God is actually now doing the best he can and can't do better, and that in all the struggle his interests are as much at stake as humanity's".(1) In brief criticism of his acceptance of the alternative which seems best to him, let us point out that he seems to limit God by some sort of power or necessity more or less without himself;

---

(1) ibid., pp. 25-26.

that, in short, he errs in his conception of power.[1] He does not seem to consider at all the possibility of a God who is self-limited.

Once having accepted this alternative he goes on further to defend it, first of all on the grounds of democracy." ..... democracy .....is the coming thing"[2] ...."is the negation of monarchy as much in religion as in politics". Therefore, "When a nation(America) that has thus repudiated monarchy in government takes time to reflect, it will surely not be long before it sees the practical impossibility of retaining in theology what it has felt bound to reject in politics".[3] That is, God must change with the national constitution, and since monarchy is no longer fashionable, a monarchial God must go! Exactly how we may conceive this democratic God who is to be the monarch's successor, we are left in doubt. Of course, he is to be a God for the people; possibly, broadly speaking of the people; and as some would have it, even by the people. But after all, we must face the fact that, whether or no we will have it, we do not, cannot elect God! Indeed, when we come to think

---

(1) Cf. our previous discussion, J. S. Mill and F. C. S. Schiller.
(2) op. cit., p. 85.
(3) ibid., p. 79.

clearly about it, is it not "rather trivial for an enlightened modern civilization to take the constitution of the United States as a model for the constitution of the Kingdom of Heaven"?(1) Of course, our idea of God must and does have in it elements of what we today call democracy - that is, we think of God as a Father, and further as a Father who respects the moral autonomy of his children. But that is far from being all of the story. As Professor E. S. Brightman has well said, "We may as well face the fact that the universe in general and religion in particular contain some undemocratic factors. We all stand face to face with facts that we cannot prevent or control; our very existence depends on a power not ourselves. If God is immanent in nature, as seems most reasonable to believe, he is a God of force, not waiting on human preferences. We must accept the universe whether it suits the majority or not."(2)

How, then, he goes on to ask, can we harmonize the relation of God, "conceived as the Life-Force of the universe to this new world movement that we call democracy?",(3) and he answers the

---

(1) E. S. Brightman, "The Meaning of Obligation", p.67.
(2) ibid., p. 68.
(3) Reeman, op. cit., p. 100.

question in this way, ".....it is identical with his general relation to the whole cosmic process and progression.....You can no more separate God, if he be the Life-Force of the universe, from democracy than you can separate him from the ethical qualities and spiritual ideals that have come to birth in the human mind". ".....so then it becomes no less true to say that God is democracy than that God is love".(1) Mr. Reeman up to this point has, implicitly at least, been defending a doctrine of divine immanence; at this point he lets that divine immanence tumble head over heels into a sort of democratic pantheism, which, if he were to carry it to its logical conclusion, would defeat his primary purpose in writing his book. However, let us give him credit for at least verbally disposing of the relation of the Life-Force or what Mr. Wells would call the "Veiled Being", to the God we know in religion. He aims at a sort of unity, in that way trying to escape the fundamental duality into which his English contemporary falls.

In his chapter, "The God of the Struggle",(2)

---

(1) ibid., p. 101.
(2) Ch. V, pp. 123-146.

he discusses some concrete instances of human suffering and says, "Do you tell me that with unlimited powers for creating a universe and bringing manhood to being, and with no necessity[1] for choosing the way of struggle and travail, God yet did choose the fearsome means and sanctioned a nature 'red in tooth and claw', and a struggle the unutterable anguish of which no human mind can fully conceive?" He concludes consequently, "How else then can we think of God than as the God of a mighty struggle, and of a constant effort and persistent outreach? If the struggle, of the universe has not been permitted by God but is rather an inevitable struggle, then it must mean something to God, and God must be winning something by it that would not otherwise have been possible. If God is really the God of our universe.....if he stands in any close and vital relation whatsoever with the world of men and things, why then, he must be the God of the struggle". In the main what we have said about Mr. H. G. Wells will apply here as well, but let us consider one further point. Mr. Reeman feels that if the struggle has not been permitted by God, it must somehow mean more to him. I merely raise

---

(1) Here again he falls into the error noted above; see also the discussion of J. S. Mill and Schiller.

he discusses some concrete instances of human suffering and says, "Do you tell me that with unlimited powers for creating a universe and bringing creatures to being, and with no necessity[1] for choosing the way of struggle and [illegible] fearsome means and [illegible] nature [illegible] and claw', and a [illegible] which no human [illegible] es consequently, [illegible] than at the end of a [illegible] stant effort and [illegible] of the universe [illegible] rather to [illegible] thing to God. [illegible] that would not [illegible] is really the [illegible] in any close and [illegible] world of men [illegible] God of the struggle [illegible] about it. [illegible] Let us consider [illegible] that if the struggle [illegible] it must somehow mean more [illegible]

---

(1) Here again he falls into [illegible]
see also the discussion of [illegible]

the counter question, must it not mean infinitely more to God if he is conscious of having permitted such a struggle with full realization of what it must mean to those creatures whom he loves in order that those creatures might work out their own salvation, might attain as free moral beings true life for themselves? That indeed, would place God far higher in the moral scale - and, I should say, reckoning it from the standpoint of cost as Mr. Reeman wishes, costs God infinitely more - in suffering, in realization of responsibility, in will. This good and moral God who feels so deeply his responsibility to his creatures that he is willing to let them suffer in order to attain real personal life, would I believe harmonize quite as well with Mr. Reeman's arguments from the practical consequences of the belief, on which J. S. Mill, William James, H. G. Wells and others far too numerous to mention have also placed such emphasis. Any statement of religion in terms of challenge is in a way valuable if we are shaken out of our rather self-satisfied spiritual and moral inertia, and of course the idea of a God who needs - indeed, can't get along without our help, offers a tremendous challenge and stimulus to us which, especially if we have - as most of us

in this generation have - heard on every hand talk about a social attitude, human brotherhood, service and the like, are eager to accept. But I wonder sometimes if much of the appeal isn't after all to our own vanity and self-satisfaction, for quite naturally it leaves us with a good feeling to think that we have been helping so important a being as God out of a rather tight place. That, I think, is one of the motives for so extensive popular acceptance of this idea in some quarters.

Over against such a conception let me place the idea of a God such as I have described above. The challenge is there too - and perhaps an even greater challenge. God, knowing fully what it would mean, yet is so truly moral, truly good, that he is willing to permit the struggle, to participate through his boundless sympathy in the terrible suffering in the lives of his creatures in order that those creatures may have the truest moral life. He is willing to put so far off the realization of that Kingdom which he would have come in men's lives, because he is a moral God who loves his creatures. He is willing now to forego much of the joy and feeling of companionship he would probably have in a race of creatures who

lived more in accordance with his holy will. There is something about a great sacrifice, about loving suffering of that sort that appeals to the highest motives of our beings - and I think that it is here that the real challenge will be found in our idea of God. Can we, as God's creatures, be even self-respecting and yet add more and more to what it has already cost God to make the world as good as it is? In the face of such overwhelming, overpowering goodness, can we make our lives any less than the best that is in our power? Must we not each one of us put forth, continuously, daily, a maximum effort, working with God and for God, towards the coming of the Kingdom of good? If God is willing to go to such lengths for us, can we choose less than the best? Such a God cannot but offer a real challenge for real effort in men's lives.

But we must not stop longer here. The most recent and by far the most valuable exposition of the belief in a finite God is that by Bishop Francis J. McConnell in his exceedingly significant book, Is God Limited?(1)

"There is not abroad today so much of an inclination to challenge the existence of a God",

---

(1) N. Y.; Abingdon Press, 1924.

---

(1) N. Y.: Abingdon Press, 1954.

says he, "as of a desire to come to closer grips with the terms in which the formal and orthodox theology has sought to set the idea of God forth. We say that God is omnipotent, and yet in the same breath we say that men are free. We say that God is omniscient, but protest that knowledge of all things does not interfere with a free life's disposing of itself as it sees fit. Moreover, what does 'presence' mean to say nothing of omnipresence? We say that God is 'in' all things, but he surely cannot be in all things in the same sense. Philosophic thinkers today are impatient, if not rebellious, toward the claims of any sort of absolutism".(1) Again the Great War(2) - but a part of the whole problem of human distress and pain - has set men to thinking along these lines more than ever before. In addition we have to face the whole problem of pain in the animal world. "Even inanimate nature is not so nearly perfect as to prevent our raising the question as to whether a Perfect Creator can reconcile that nature with any of his own perfections".(3) Further, today we find a new insistence

---

(1) McConnell's Is God Limited?, pp. 7-8.
(2) Cf. the influence of the War on H. G. Wells and Reeman. See above.
(3) op. cit., pp. 9, 10.

upon the value of human lives, with the concomitant question as to whether or not these lives are in some degree independent creators. And again, we find not only difficulties in connection with the question of the relations of human personalities to God, but difficulties "involved in the very idea of personality itself".(1) These, according to Bishop McConnell are some of the problems with which we must grapple if we would answer the question uppermost in so many minds today, "Is God limited?".

In attempting in some measure to reply to that question, Bishop McConnell lets his problem fall naturally into three parts: (1) "Are there limitations for God in the creation of and carrying forward of the material universe? (2) Are there limitations for God in the creation of and in the relation to men? (3) Are there limitations in the very fact that we conceive of God as a person?". And, "if there are such limitations, how are we to conceive of them as to preserve the moral and spiritual values which are the glory of the Christian ideal of God?"(2)

In what the author of Is God Limited? says

---

(1) op. cit., pp. 9, 10.
(2) op. cit., p. 11.

in reply to these questions, we have a most admirable discussion of almost every argument which has been advanced either for or against the belief in a finite God - a discussion characterized by real philosophical depth, withal never forgetting the needs of the "man-on-the-street". Carefully, accurately, inclusively, Bishop McConnell marshalls his facts; with a mind which is exceptionally free from bias he interprets them, trying, in so far as is humanly possible, to take everything into account before formulating his conclusions. The result is a theory of God which commands intellectual respect.

For today, says he, "Christianity is more concerned with an absolutely moral God[1] than with metaphysical absolutism - and probably the absolutely moral God would find it necessary to work under some actual limitations.[2] As to how we may conceive of these limitations - "It's all up in the air, I know; but better be up in the air than in the dark. If we get a God about whom we just utter phrases into which we can put only an intellectual content, we have taken a long step toward banishing God".[3]

---

(1) Indeed, I think that has been the hope of the finite God advocates from Epicurus on. It has taken a long time for many churchmen to realize this, however.
(2) ibid., p. 24.
(3) ibid., p. 55.

It is as a protest against this God of bare abstraction, "against the metaphysician's emptying all the concrete our of divine experience",(1) that Bishop McConnell expounds his view.

As it is with that view that I find myself in fundamental agreement, I shall let much of my discussion of Is God Limited? serve as a statement of my own views as well.(2) That I may more clearly point out, however, what seem to be the major elements in the defence of a limited God, I shall deviate greatly from the division of the subject matter made by the author, and follow a somewhat different plan - synthesizing, in some instances, arguments far apart from each other in that book; in other instances, further dividing some of the material which Bishop McConnell has there brought together. I shall, nevertheless, while making the major divisions of the subject very different, follow in so far as is possible the order of Bishop McConnell's discussion in my subdivisions. My discussion will fall,

---

(1) ibid., p. 53

(2) Many, indeed the major part of my conclusions were reached - in general, at least, before the publication of Bishop McConnell's book, Is God Limited?, which appeared in the spring of 1924; my first defence of a finite God came during the year 1923. In the discussion which follows, where no points of disagreement are noted, the implication will be that Bishop McConnell's discussion is such that I am in fundamental agreement with it.

consequently, into four groups: (1) The limitations of God which really limit him; (2) those limitations which are of but a formal character; (3) those "limitations" upon which, although serious on the basis of the old theology, we do not now look as limitations at all; and (4) the attributes of God which remain as essential in spite of the many limitations upon the Divine Being.

First of all, then, let us look at the ways in which God really seems to be limited. Certain such limitations necessarily grow out of the relation of God to the creation of an external material universe.

In a lucid chapter on "Relativity and Theism",[1] we find a discussion of the relation of God to space - and incidentally an excellent example of what Bishop McConnell means when he protests against the"emptying of all the concrete out of divine experience." "In our attempt to keep God free from his subserviency to the spatial universe which is his continuous deed we must not take him from the system in such fashion as to deprive him of the vision which would confront an ordinary pair of human eyes"[2] "Spatial activity may be an essential to the divine Mind rooted in the nature of

---

(1) op. cit., Ch. II, pp. 25-44
(2) ibid., p. 42.

mind itself".[1] "In some forms of thought God may be no more able to think unspatially than to disregard his own nature".[2] Nor do we "help the thought of God's freedom when we make space unreal"; but "we may clear ourselves of some baffling limitations when we attempt to define the nature of that reality as mental. Then God is dealing not with a vast actual space which he can never surmount nor escape. He is a thinker and a doer with part at least of his activities taking the spatial form".[3] Space is, therefore, a mental form, and "we must not think of mental forms as something that can be put off or on like a fancied pair of spectacles".[4] "In our struggle to free God from unworthy limitations, we must not shut him out from the view which makes the world glorious to us". He that framed the eye, shall he not see? He that made the mind so that it seizes the glory of the world under the space form, shall he not have whatever vision there is through the space form?"[5] So God is, in that way, limited by space.

Again, there is the relation of God to time. We may most satisfactorily think of time,

---

(1) ibid., p. 42.
(2) ibid., p. 42
(3)(4)(5) ibid., p. 43.

---

(1) Ibid., p. 42.
(2) Ibid., p. 42
(3)(4)(5) Ibid., p. 43.

like space, as a mental form, and "inherent in the nature of mental process itself".(1) Time involves change, and "it is change that makes the heart of our perplexity".(2) Conventional theology has held to a timeless God, as a "protest against an ageing or developing God, or a God likely to be taken by surprise by the unforseen deeds of free men".(3) But "there remains another conceivability - that God eternally acts and eternally, or everlastingly, seizes the changes under a time-form essentially like ours though immeasurably superior in grasp and scope, or at least that he knows to the full what before-and-after means, no matter what other ways of knowing time he may possess".(4) "If change means anything for him - and it would seem to mean something if being itself is activity so largely changing - time must mean something also".(5) "The metaphysician falls back upon the unpicturable activities of the infinite. He tells us that a timeless world must be thought and not pictured. Very likely the Author of thought itself can think

---

(1) ibid., p. 45.
(2) ibid., p. 48. Cf. the evolutionary basis of the finite God idea as developed in the periodical literature discussed above.
(3)(4) ibid., p. 49.
(5) ibid., p. 50.

anything that is unthinkable, but we insist that these attempts to shut off God into the realm of pure thought - the realm of changes seized by some intellectual process of which we know nothing, while the realm of before-and-after is merely human - we insist, we repeat, that these views are the ones that really limit God in an unworthy way.(1) In the attempt to get an unlimited God they end by shutting him up a good deal in the dark".(2) So the Divine Being is not "timeless" and "immutable" in the words of the old theology, and we cannot "excuse God from experience of the before-and-after if we are not to limit him so as to make him of little help to us. For him the difference between 'is' and 'was' and 'will be' must mean something".(3)

Another limitation of the divine Being growing out of that Being's relation to the material universe is that which arises from the problem of physical evil. From the earliest thinking about God on down throughout the ages there has appeared off and on the idea that God is somehow limited by

---

(1) Wm. James in "The Dilemma of Determinism" (in the volume, The Will to Believe, p. 131), speaks of the idea of a divine mind which is timeless as a "gratuitous fiction", and develops this viewpoint further.
(2) ibid., p. 50.
(3) ibid., p. 53.

matter. Later thought has, however, made it clear that if we are to have any proper theism at all, matter cannot stand apart from God.(1) Science tells us that matter is force, and for the theist "the forces are the continually put-forth energies of God. .....It follows as an immediate conclusion that, so far as the world of matter is concerned, apart from any question as to human freedom, there is no way of freeing God from responsibility for physical evil.(2) It may, indeed, be a limitation upon God, but it is not a limitation upon him by something outside of himself".(3)

Bishop McConnell then goes on to discuss this problem of responsibility for pain and physical evil in general. In the world of moral agents we can, within limits, justify pain for its educative moral value; but - and here I do not see how anyone can think otherwise - "pain in an animal world,

---

(1) Time will not permit an adequate discussion of this essential point, so I shall here assume its truth. For a defence of this view, Cf. Bowne, Sorley, Brightman, et al.
(2) I think Bishop McConnell's frank placing of the responsibility where it belongs is to be commended. Contrast this with the attempt to place the responsibility anywhere but on God in Voltaire, Rousseau, Mill, Perry, Howison, Wells, et al.
(3) op. cit., p. 58. So also Rashdall.

however, where there is no possibility of moral utilization of pain, raises an opaque mystery",[1] of which there is no explanation in terms of our present knowledge. Indeed, says Bishop McConnell, "If I desired to make an argument against the goodness of God, or even in behalf of atheism, I think I would start with the utter hopelessness and meaninglessness, from our point of view, of animal pain".[2][3] That would seem, therefore, to place a serious moral limitation upon God were he limited in no other way.

There is, however, one avenue of relief here - one growing out of a suggestion made by Leibniz as to the "limitations inherent in a finite system even in the hands of an infinite worker".[4] Even the Infinite cannot make the finite other than finite. ".....the merit of the Leibnizian suggestion lies", consequently, "in the fact that if we are to think of creation as at all the work of a rational Creator, there must be some heed paid to the requirements of system as system".[5] So God is limited, not by a vast and rather meaningless

---

(1) ibid., p. 62.
(2) ibid., p. 63.
(3) Bishop Gore in his Belief in God, p. 121 emphasizes this point.
(4)(5) ibid., p. 64.

matter entirely outside of himself but rather by the demands of system as system inherent in his very being, if we are to have a coherent and understandable universe at all.(1)

Closely connected with this argument - indeed I believe Bishop McConnell makes it a part of it - we have a further limitation in God's being. Underneath all our desire for coherence and system is an unwillingness to have the world just the outcome of any plan, which might conceivably have been changed for some other. "We desire the world to come out of the best plan, or out of something like a plan so good that it becomes an intellectual necessity to the Creator to carry it out. We do not care for a creator who shows his freedom from limitation by trying now one plan, and now another. We like to think of him as shut up to the best plan. The limitation in such sense is the limitation of the best itself".(2)(3)

---

(1) Contrast this again with the views of Voltaire, Rousseau, Mill, Wells, et al.
(2) ibid., p. 65.
(3) Rashdall clearly recognizes this; unfortunately, however, much loose thinking in other quarters represents God as apparently trying first one plan and then another until he finds the one that is best. To such a misrepresentation of God is due, I believe, much of the aversion to the finite God idea in general.

"In loose popular speech we can say that God could have done things differently. In this we merely mean to emphasize the truth that he is not bound by a deterministic necessity, but the best always binds the free chooser. The most free of beings has no choice when he is confronted by the best".(1) Of course, again we have here no limitation outside of God himself, but rather a necessity of his very being.

While we do not seek, therefore, to minimize the limitations which the physical universe at least seems to put upon God, we must remember that those "limitations must be such and such only as wisdom calls for".(2)

Now let us consider these limitations which seem to be real ones for God growing out of his relation to the world of men - and especially out of the problem of human freedom.

We must first of all assume freedom if we are to get anywhere at all in the moral world. Of course, that freedom we know as ours is far from

---

(1) ibid., p. 66.
(2) Contrast J. S. Mill, Three Essays on Religion, p. 177, where he insists queerly enough, that wisdom and contrivance are shown in overcoming difficulties, and there is no room for them in a Being for whom no difficulties exist.

(1) Ibid., p. 60.
(2) Contrast J. S. Mill. Three Essays on Religion, p. 177. Where he finally queries "might not a Supreme and contrivance are also in the universe?" (Italics mine. and there is no room for them in a Deity, for whom no difficulties exist.

being in any sense an absolute freedom - and yet, limited, hedged in as it is on every hand, we must recognize it as a prodigious force. Granting, then, that men are free within certain limits - free to produce if not to create outrightly - can we still look upon the Divine Being as omnipotent? And our reply is, in the words of Bishop McConnell, "It is at this point of human freedom that we feel that limitation should be made on the doctrine of divine omnipotence.(1) Most surely we shall have to give up the dictionary idea of omnipotence. We can see that God can do all things except those which his own rational and moral character make impossible, and those which are turned over to the sphere of the freedom of a free man's choice, the human factor itself being the grant of the Creator, and moving within a range of activities where the will of God must necessarily be a cooperating fact. It is not as if God could be thought of creating a will and then allowing that will to go its own course. The soul itself is a continuously acting agent drawing the resources of its strength from the Divine. Without aiming at knowledge too high for us we may fairly say that in a sense a human life is two

---

(1) This has been especially recognized since the time of James's emphatic insistence on the creativity of the human will.

interacting processes - the human and the divine - the processes sometimes almost parallel and again somewhat opposed but inextricably bound up together, the choices of the human making necessary now one type and now another of divine activity". Therefore, "in the meaning that human choices condition the divine activity, there is necessarily limitation of the divine will",(1) and God, in this sense, is no longer omnipotent.

Is God likewise limited from the standpoint of omniscience, we may ask? Here our conclusion is not so certain; indeed, it seems that this age-old debate" is about as far from settlement now as when it was first raised".(2) "The foreknowledge of a free act has never been proved a contradiction,(3) and it has never been shown that the inability of Divine wisdom to foresee a free choice would seriously upset divine procedure. As knowing all the possibilities in the whole situation, God would seem to be in possession of all the knowledge worth-while". To make this point somewhat clearer, let us think of God as James suggests in "The Dilemma of Determinism", as a sort of divine chess-player.(4)

---

(1) McConnell, op. cit., pp. 120-121.
(2) ibid., p. 123.
(3) John Stuart Mill made the same statement in the 1860's.
(4) James, The Will to Believe and Other Essays, pp.181-2.

Let us suppose two men before a chess-board, the one a novice, the other an expert player of the game. While the expert is certain of winning in the long run, he cannot foresee exactly what any one actual move of his adversary will be, although he knows all of the possible moves of the latter, and also how to meet each of them by a counter-move of his own which will lead eventually to victory. On this analogy, the novice stands for us finite free agents, and the expert for God. There is a final end of the universe which will mean victory for God, and yet the creator's plan of that universe "would thus be left blank as to many of its actual details, but all possibilities would be marked down. The realization of some of these would be left absolutely to chance, that is, would only be determined when the moment of realization came, other possibilities would be contingently determined, that is, their decision would have to wait till it was seen how the matters of absolute chance fell out. But the rest of the plan, including its final upshot, would be rigorously determined once for all. So the Creator himself would not need to know all the details of actuality until they came: and at any time his own view of the world would be a view partly of facts and partly of possibilities

exactly as our is now." That I believe, is the only tenable solution of the problem of the relation of the divine omniscience to human freedom; and I must agree with Bishop McConnell's conclusion, "If any sacrifice is to be made, I personally should prefer the sacrifice of the divine omniscience rather than human freedom." And "it is not irreverence to say that God, that the God in whom we believe, knew what he was doing when he made men free - that, if there has been any curtailing of divine knowledge, it was done in the very bestowal of freedom on man, which we believe to have been a free act of God's own will".(1)

Now that we have considered some of the apparent limitations of God of a more metaphysical character - i.e., those of space, of time, of system as system, of the ideal of the best, and the questions of God's omnipotence and God's omniscience, we shall enter the realm of more practical experience, and "deal with the limitations upon God from the fact of his personal and social dealings with created men".

In a striking chapter on "The Bonds of Creatorship",(2) we have a valuable discussion of

---

(1) McConnell, op. cit., p.124. So also Rashdall especially.
(2) ibid., pp. 126-136.

the problems in which we here find ourselves involved. As we think of what creatorship implies,[1] we come to the conclusion that there could hardly be a heavier responsibility conceivable than the creation of a race of free men.[2] "The moment..... another person appears God takes on new obligations with the arrival of that person. He becomes a member of moral society."[3] Membership in a moral society quite naturally carries with it some limitations; "there are some general obligations upon God because of his creatorship which must be recognized".[4] There is, indeed, a holiness "Binding on God himself".[5] We can not stop with the doctrine that God is love - essential and wonderful as that is; we cannot, if we would have the best possible world, if we would make our lives the best lives, empty "all the stiff morality out of the divine nature".[6] "If we are to

---

(1) Contrast this, for example, with a view like Howison's, which denies entirely the creation of individual selves.
(2) Sir Oliver Lodge, in his article in the Hibbert Journal, p. 715, recognizes this the most clearly of any of the other exponents of a finite God.
(3) ibid., p. 127.
(4) ibid., p. 128.
(5) ibid., p. 134.
(6) ibid., p. 133.

think of God as under obligations of respect to the freedom of men, we can see something of the unspeakable complexity of the tasks before God - that middle road which must be stern even for God to travel. The old doctrine of settling all human problems by divine decree of an Absolute sovereign will not work.....
.....To keep the divine power on the soul and yet to leave the soul free just to the right degree for the attainment of moral selfhood is a tax even on divine resources, a tax that calls not for such mighty puttings-forth of energy as would move mountains but self-control and skill and patience beyond all human understanding".(1) So God, too, is bound in a way by the limitations of membership in moral society, and by a holiness of his own nature which is worthy of a responsible God.

In this connection let us digress for a moment or two and consider the question of God's relation to prayer, for it is evident that "in no field does the idea of a limited God count with more practical effect than here". In answer to the question, Can God answer prayer?, we have on the face of it some limitations - but limitations which are a part of God's very being. These seem to be three in

---

(1) ibid., pp. 135-136.

number: (1) "God must be true to me in dealing with me"; he "cannot deal with a petitioner in any such fashion as to leave the petitioner less of a man after the petition has been granted. God cannot pauperize his children";[1] (2) the God of the answered prayer must be true "not merely to the petitioner but to all others who compose the family of God. All prayer is to be conceived in social terms".[2] (3) the God of the answered prayer must be true to himself. "It would be a contradiction in terms to expect the Christ-like God to do an unchristian deed even in answer to prayer".[3] These "limitations" - if indeed they be limitations - are so self-evident that they require no further discussion here.

There is yet another limitation of God which we must consider in relation to prayer, indeed in relation to any of the cooperative work between God and man. "The work together brings a different result from the work of either taken alone. Man could not work alone, and God's work is different when the human mark is upon it". "Unless by the exercise of inscrutable omniscience, God did not actually see some roses and some fruits till human

---

(1) ibid., p. 151.
(2) ibid., p. 153.
(3) ibid., p. 155.

scientists brought them to perfection".[1] That seems to limit God practically in a very real sense. And here on this plane certainly, if anywhere, the "challenge" of the idea to us as human beings which so many of the defenders of a finite God are so fond of advocating,[2] would certainly be operative. Can we do less than our best if what we do is to be of such cosmic significance? So much, then, for the limitations of God in relation to the world of men.

Following the method of division which we advocated above, we now come properly to the question of the real limitations inherent in the divine personality itself. However, since we are here discussing the real limitations of God, and since everyone of the limitations urged against God in the connection, upon closer examination reveals itself really to be, in the final analysis, not a limitation at all, or at best merely formal limitations, we shall not stop here for further consideration of that question, leaving its discussion rather to its deserved place.

Leaving then, these limitations of God which really limit him in any serious way, we come upon some others which are customarily so considered,

---

(1) ibid., p. 157.
(2) Especially from J. S. Mill on to the present. Cf. James, Perry, Wells, Reeman, Sir Oliver Lodge, et al.

but which upon closer inspection are shown to be rather of a purely formal character. It is these which we shall now consider.

Here first of all, we are met with the question, Is God Absolute?(1) Not a few word battles have centered about this one point. The view has been often advanced that if we are to believe in an "absolute" God, there will be no place left in the divine for the relative at all. Some carry this so far as to hold that "the instant an absolute comes into relation to anything it ceases to be absolute." As a result, we find a great deal of scepticism concerning the absoluteness of God.(2) Such scepticism, really however, amounts to little more than mere verbalisms, for it is bound by a crass literalism, a crude belief we might say in the infallibility of the dictionary where absolute is absolute and relative is relative, and there can be no common meeting ground. But - "in life the absolute may be subjected to whatever qualifications we may agree upon. Provisionally God may be thought of as absolute in the sense that he is dependent on nothing outside of himself",(3)

---

(1) Cf., e.g., Bradley, Appearance and Reality and C. C. J. Webb, God and Personality for positive discussion of the question.
(2) Especially prevalent in the ranks of the finite God defenders.
(3) McConnell, op. cit., p. 16.

and any real limitation of God on this score vanishes into the thin air of mere form.

Closely connected with this is the further formal limitation involved in the solution of the relation of the doer to the deed done. We look upon the universe of matter as God's continuous deed; we ask, therefore, in what sense is such a continuous deed a limitation of the doer?; and we find our answer in the self-evident fact that any doer is limited by his own character - that his deed could not be larger than himself. So it is in that purely formal fashion that, if we must, we may say that God is limited.

Again some thinkers seem to limit God in that his is a "course that requires purposeful action according to reason",(1) and it is a more of a peculiarity of our thought that we look upon any such course as "somehow more of a limitation upon a mind than a course which lets the mind run according to its own sweet will".(2) This, too, we see finally to be no real limitation upon the Divine Being.

Again, the universe is often viewed and spoken of as a tool in the hands of God, and this seems to many minds necessarily to imply further

---

(1) E.g., J. S. Mill.
(2) McConnell, op. cit., p. 18.

limitations of the Divine Being. But as Bishop McConnell points out, having to work with such a tool is a limitation only "until the tool shows its capacity for enlarging the power of the holder"; and "in such hands is there much reason for raising the question of limitation?"[1]

A more serious limitation, especially in the opinion of the extreme theological dogmatist or the naively theological scientist, is that which seems to be placed on God by the idea of law. By some sort of an odd perversion of the actual status of affairs, they hold that "regularity and order are marks of divine limitation",[2][3] rather than that "law is a statement of God's method in doing".[4] Of course, in this instance it is easy enough to see how that misconception comes about, for with us as human beings, much of the law with which we come in contact is law which is imposed almost entirely from without. Here also, we have more of a formal than a real limitation; indeed, "we simply point out the folly of the notion that the discovery of law in the universe means a limitation of the Mind of the Universe".[5]

---

(1) ibid., p. 22.
(2) ibid., p. 71.
(3) Again see the view of John Stuart Mill, H. G. Wells, et al.
(4) ibid., p. 69.
(5) ibid., p. 77.

Rather "we are at least in line with our own experience in suggesting that God may find his liberty through the law which expresses his wisdom".(1)

In a day when evolution is still somewhat the charmed word of the hour,(2) and when the thought in so many minds seems decidedly to limit God through the evolutionary process, Bishop McConnell does well in pointing out so clearly that here too we find, when we face the facts, that we are but confronting another formal limitation. We must realize that evolution is "really the method by which the Creator moves through the creative process";(3) and further, that "evolution ought not to be allowed to limit God's concern to types".(4) And we must not fall back into that former popular interpretation of the evolutionary theory "which made it incurably optimistic, so optimistic as to threaten the sovereignty of a moral God".

Again, there is the less serious - though on the part of the "man-on-the-street" far more

---

(1) ibid., p. 78. So much of the religious scepticism of the past half century would have been avoided had men only recognized this!
(2) Cf. especially the emphasis given this point in the realm of periodical literature. Sir Oliver Lodge, Overstreet, Wright, Ukichi, Foster, et al.
(3) McConnell, op. cit., p. 79.
(4) ibid., p. 89.

common attempt to limit God, or perhaps speaking from a bit broader standpoint the divine forces, by their apparent necessity of having to work through a human institution like the church. This to many uncritical minds is an almost hopeless limitation. But we must remember that the church is not the only agency through which the divine forces work; it is but one of many. However, if some feel they must hold to this seeming limitation of God, we are quite willing to grant them their point at least formally - for of course it is evident that "by his own laws, God cannot do as much through persons working separately, as through persons built together as an organism. Hence the necessity of a church".(1)

Another apparent limitation, one which seems to be inherent in the nature of personality itself, is that arising from the relation of personality to the law of development. All personality, as we know it, seems to be such as to be under a necessity for development. But since law is really an expression of God's method in doing, we can hardly look upon that as a real or serious limitation. Rather, "if God is developing by laws of his own nature, then the development is simply a making

---

(1) ibid., pp. 134-5.

explicit what is already implicit".[1] We must raise the further question, "Can we think of God as having voluntarily so limited himself that in dealing with the men whom he has created he has brought into force a condition which means change to himself? It certainly must make a difference to God whether men move morally up or down.....If up..... do they not bring to God something he did not have before? Granted that man cannot add to God's power or his wisdom, cannot they by their appreciation of God add something to his life that he might not otherwise have had? Cannot they by failure to appreciate him take from him something that would have added to the fullness of his joy? Is this, however, what we mean by being subject to the laws of the development? I can see nothing in this to take from the dignity of a God creating children in his own image and thereby putting them on a plane where they may or may not respond to him".[2] Such a God is surely far more understandable and real.

Again, some want to limit God from the standpoint of personality because true personality comes only as an outgrowth of moral struggle.

---

(1) ibid., p. 250.
(2) ibid., p. 251.

---

(1) Ibid., p. 280.
(2) Ibid., p. 281.

"Looking at the moral aspect again, can we honor a God who has not won his moral character by a struggle upward?[1] .....but it is not a matter of credit or honor merely..... The question is as to a realized ideal. ..... Is not a will activity forever at the full, always acting out the moral ideal, worthier still?"[2] And in reply to that question, upon any adequate moral theory at all, we can but say, yes.

Yet a further limitation from the same standpoint seems to be this: we face on every hand "the limitation of actual human personality and the difficulty of conceiving a method of knowing that would sweep all into one intuition".[3] But when we think through our question, in so far as that is possible, we come to the conclusion that "there is no reason to think that God may not have a power of sympathetic appreciation of men's points of view at the same time that he sees those points of view in their relation to ultimate truth".[4]

Then last there is the rather sweeping

---

(1) So especially H. W. Wright. This demand implicit at least in the thinking of most of the finite God defenders.
(2) ibid., p. 252.
(3) ibid., p. 252.
(4) ibid., p. 254.

generalized limitation put upon God by those who insist that, anyway we put it, "personality is not a large enough conception for God".(1) "Men have tried to find some intellectual provision for an escape from the loneliness of an existence which seems to them solitary ..... in the uniqueness of its unsharable excellence". And yet ultimately, I think we must agree with Bishop McConnell that "there is no inherent contradiction in the thought of divine personality itself which would forever preclude God from adequate objects for justice and love and fellowship. The absence of such contradiction is all we are concerned to show. There is no reason why the tightness of human personality should mark the Divine Personality".(2)

Now that we have considered the purely formal limitations put upon God, let us look last of all at those elements in our consideration of the divine which on the basis of the old theology would be limitations but which on the basis of the view that we are here defending would no longer be limitations at all.

On the basis of the old orthodoxy we should, for example, come up against a rather severe

---

(1) ibid., p. 256. A crude or at best a semi-refined anthropomorphism lurks behind many expressions of such a view.
(2) ibid., p. 268. So also Rashdall.

limitation in relation to the problem of forgiveness. There divine forgiveness was rather an unlimited thing in the sense of being dependent we almost might say on the whim of God. "Whom I will, I love; whom I will, I hate". It was not really a moral question at all. How much more to be commended is a view such as Bishop McConnell develops here. Forgiveness, salvation, is not the outgrowth of a mood or temporary fancy of Deity; "God cannot save men immorally". So, "if forgiveness is limited when it is confined to moral terms, then limitation is strangely conceived, for such limitation would serve to set on high the unlimited goodness of God. No soundly penitent seeker would ask to be forgiven on any but moral terms".(1) Rather, in the end, "every phase of forgiveness will be seen to be a manifestation of the unlimited moral goodness of God".

Again, on the old view people looked upon an infallible revelation as an evidence of an unlimited God. But Bishop McConnell says, "Let us ask ourselves what we would do with an infallible revelation if we had it. One thing we would have to do - we would have forthwith to give up the idea of a moral God training children into likeness with

---

(1) ibid., p. 147.

himself".[1]

The old orthodoxy, too, has fallen prey to an exclusiveness of immortality, and has been most profuse in its denunciation and condemnation to an eternal oblivion all those souls not in accord with its own circumscribed narrowness. Such a view of God as that would imply let us contrast with that of the author of Is God Limited? ".....Almost as serious a limitation as we could possibly put upon God would be to accept some of the doubts about immortality.[2] If God is limited to the present life in dealing with men, we have cut deeply into his power, and if he limits himself to the present life, we have a God of doubtful moral character".[3] "Once created, the soul has inalienable rights ..... a soul cannot be allowed to perish until no other course is morally possible".[4] So we may conclude that, rather than limiting God after the fashion of the old orthodoxy, "if we can believe in immortality, at one stroke our thought of God is immeasurably relieved and expanded. A God shut up to dealing

---

(1) ibid., p.
(2) The old idea of Hell would certainly tend to do away with any real immortality for by far the greater number of souls.
(3) ibid., p. 230.
(4) ibid., p. 234.

with persons on a merely earthly plan would be indeed a limited God".(1)

Thinking in terms of that older view, another evidence of non-limitation would be his impassibility, on which at one time such emphasis was laid. It is not a worthy conception of God, we were told, which brings him within the reach of pain. "How can we think of a God who can be pained as the infinite?", for "the most limiting experience that we know is pain". So, they thought, "if pain reaches to the center of the universe we have seriously limited God". But let us here again contrast our view - stated in Bishop McConnell's words - with this. "I think a sound Christian consciousness would insist that if pain does not reach God, God is limited... ...If God cannot know pain, he is limited in his own personal being".(2) To this the critic might reply that he is not denying feeling to God but the feeling of pain. That would leave us worse off still. "If God can feel and yet does not feel pain for the sufferings of the children whom he has called into the world, we have a moral lack in him which makes him unworthy".(3) "A God who cannot suffer with and

---

(1) ibid., pp. 239-40.
(2) ibid., p. 284.
(3) ibid., p. 285.

for men is below the level of the thousands of men who willingly suffer for causes and persons..... There is no way for God to escape sorrow if he is a God of love". So "sorrow may be not an index of weakness or limitation but of strength and outreach of moral understanding".(1) On our view, then, God would be limited not at all by his power of suffering, but only indeed by that state of "impassibility" so dear to the old orthodoxy. Certain it is that such a suffering God is much nearer man; he is an understanding and understandable Father, and not an unfeeling and incomprehensible taskmaster - and a God who is infinitely more worthy of faith and worship and reverence and love and service.

These, then, instead of being limitations of God as they would surely be on the old view, prove themselves no longer to be limitations at all; indeed, rather then limiting or narrowing our thought of God, they permit us to hold to a conception of God which is vastly enlarged and expanded.

As a result of our examination of Bishop McConnell's defence of a finite God, we find that we are at last in possession of a view which has come up before the judgment bar of truth, but which has

---

(1) ibid., pp. 237-38.

not been found wanting.(1)

Before passing, however, to our conclusion let us look briefly at one more exposition of the idea - that by Professor Edgar S. Brightman.(2) Here we find an approach which is, I believe, as unique as it is essential - an approach growing out of a well-rounded theory of moral obligation.(3) "Metaphysical progress, eternal development, is, I believe, a religious faith that follows from the nature of moral obligation; for the end commanded by duty will never be attained until every person has exhausted all of his possibilities of ideal-forming and ideal-realizing: that is to say, it will never be finally attained". But if we accept such a view we are met with "the problem of the perfectible

---

(1) I have really but one criticism to offer of Bishop McConnell's defence of the idea, and that is that he gives no adequate recognition to the problem necessarily growing out of the existence of great numbers of human beings who are in one way or another defective mentally, and who cannot as a result properly be said to have moral life." Bishop McConnell feels keenly the problem presented by animal suffering; but do we not here have a far greater perplexity?

(2) To whom I am indebted for many of the suggestions upon which I have based my own view of a finite God. Professors Brightman and Rashdall and Bishop McConnell are the thinkers who have helped me most in arriving at and formulating that view.

(3) "The Meaning of Obligation". Rochester Theological Seminary Bulletin, Nov., 1924.

universe implied by morality and the perfect God implied by religion". If we mean Christianity when we speak of religion, and if we rightly interpret that Christianity, says Professor Brightman, the problem will be "largely verbal"; for "Christianity believes in a perfect God but has never believed that the universe is now perfect". By divine perfection, however, it has not meant that its God is - or was - static, that is "until God fell into the hands of the theologians. For historical Christianity God was a being in whose life something happens; creation, atonement, joy over sinners that repent, the growth of the kingdom". "Christianity essentially believes in the reality of change". "A static perfection is not perfect. The law of obligation always drives beyond what we are to more discoveries, higher values, new relations with others and with God".(1)

Out of these facts, then, we formulate a view of God. "We may", therefore, "admit that the actual facts of our world become much easier to interpret if instead of the utterly timeless God of theologians we have a living God for whom the evolution that is his favorite method is no mere form,

---

(1) E. S. Brightman, op. cit., pp. 69-70.

but is a real experience. A God to be a God must know everything that can be known and be able to do everything that can be done; but a rational, responsible, personal God must be loyal to the conditions of rationality, responsibility and personality, unless the cosmos is mere chaos. We have been too anxious in defence of abstract concepts of eternity, infinity and perfection to be thoroughly alert to the interpretation of reality. A moral God, eternally active, eternally creative, eternally reasonable is indeed a God who will forever and changelessly be loyal to the same fundamental principles of obligation and value: but he is also a God who is limited by the very conditions of his being".(1)

It has been a long road from Epicurus's formulation of the finite God theory in the third century B.C. down to Bishop McConnell's significant development of that theory in the twentieth century A.D. In that idea of God has been found a common meeting ground for such diverse thinkers as the pagan philosopher of Athens; the Persian Manichaeus; the Christian Marcion; the eighteenth-century trio - Voltaire, Rousseau, and "the terrible David" Hume, who so inspired their orthodox brethren of the day

---

(1) ibid., p. 70.

(2) Ibid., p. 70.

with fear for the faith; these philosophers of widely different schools of thought - James and John Stuart Mill, James, Schiller, Perry, Howison, McTaggart, Hobhouse, Rashdall, and Brightman; the popular novelist and historian, H. G. Wells; a Unitarian clergyman, E. H. Reeman; the English physicist and spiritualist, Sir Oliver Lodge; the Japanese Ukichi; and a Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church - F. J. McConnell. Surely where there is such smoke, there must be some fire! While the whole truth has hardly been revealed to any single observer, each observer has given some partial superiority of insight from the peculiar vantage point which has been his.

At times there have been for each many almost insuperable difficulties in the way of any adequate world view. They have tried in those moments to interpret and harmonize as best they can with some sort of a theism what Wordsworth called the eternal and daily spectacle

" .....of the dread strife
Of Poor humanity's afflicted will
Struggling in vain with ruthless destiny".

To some this ruthless destiny has been but the expression of a power not God, a power which is apart from and in opposition to God. By attributing it to something not divine they have been able to

hold on to a God - severely limited as he is - who is yet good. To others, this same "ruthless destiny - while it has indeed lost none of its ruthlessness, while nature has still appeared to them "red in tooth and claw", - does not seem a destiny apart from God but one which is the result of the working out of a final good purpose of a good God, difficult though the conditions of its realization may be. To all the problem has been a very real one; the attempts to

"Assert eternal Providence
And justify the ways of God to man"

sincere ones.

I think, indeed, that it is evidence of a growing goodness in men's natures that what they after all seem to be seeking and reaching out to is not a God who is powerful above everything else and a universe whose salvation is all "cut and dried", but a God who is himself developing, whose very being is morality; who is not an object of dread or terror, or even fear, but who is a God of moral love and moral inspiration; a God in every sense worthy of reverence and worship. Moral men in a moral universe must have a moral God. We are today impatient of the old and barren abstractionism which talked much of divinity and its attributes but which said so

little; we want to come to closer grips with the reality of the world we know as it relates to God. Man has taken a real step forward in the recognition of the evolutionary character of the universe of which he is a part; and in a growing universe it will hardly be possible for him to remain content with the static God-conceptions of the older theologians. The God-idea must be a meaningful one to him- as surely it is when it is truly grasped - or he will have none of it. This is the tendency in much of our thinking today, a tendency well expressed in the words of Robert Louis Stevenson, which I quote humbly and in all reverence;

"It's a simple thing that I demand,
Though humble as can be -
A statement fair in my Maker's hand
To a gentleman like me -
A clean account, writ fair and broad,
And a plain apologee -
Or deevil a ceevil word to God
From a gentleman like me."

Yes - moral men will demand a moral God. And I believe that ultimately that "statement fair" for which men are asking will be found in that theory of a finite God in its best aspects with which we have been here dealing.

BOSTON UNIVERSITY
1 1719 02483 0673

B. U. Libraries

Not to be taken from this room